

THAILAND-VIETNAM RELATIONS IN THE 1990s

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies Thailand-Vietnam relations in the 1990s. Since Vietnam invaded Cambodia at the end of 1978, their bilateral relations became poor. In 1986, Vietnam implemented the “Doi Moi” policy to solve domestic economic problems. Chatichai Choonhavan the leader of Thailand responded to this new policy of Vietnam with the “turning the Indochina battlefields into market places” policy. These new policies improved the relations between the two countries. In the early 1990s, Thailand and Vietnam focused their cooperation on economic issues. They could agree on many sensitive issues in the late 1990s and cooperated in various areas. In the post-Cold War period, the major powers were unreliable for Vietnam. Unlike the regional organizations established earlier, ASEAN tried to avoid being influenced by major powers. Vietnam became more involved in ASEAN and gained membership in 1995 with Thailand’s support. Thailand and Vietnam also cooperated in sub-regional organizations.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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To my father and mother

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INTRODUCTION

Before the 1990s, Thailand-Vietnam relations were quite poor. There was a short period, from March 24, 1946 – August 21, 1946, when they had friendly relations under Pridi Phanomyong the Prime Minister of Thailand who supported North Vietnam to fight against France. However, the following administrations under the military leadership instead sided with the United States against Communism and established relations with South Vietnam. Later, when North Vietnam took over South Vietnam in 1975, Thailand and Vietnam enjoyed a brief period of cordial relations when Vietnam approached Thailand to establish diplomatic relations. Although the two countries had established their diplomatic relations since August 6, 1976, Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia at the end of 1978 turned the cordial relations into an enmity for over a period of ten years. Thailand-Vietnam relations before the 1990s were highly influenced by international politics and the major powers, especially the United States, the Soviet Union, and China.

In contrast to the confrontation between the two countries in the pre-1990 period, Thailand-Vietnam relations in the 1990s were characterized by economic cooperation that led to a wide-range of collaborations in other areas as well at different levels: bilateral, regional, and sub-regional. Thailand-Vietnam relations began to improve after 1988 when Thailand carried out the “Turning the battlefield into a marketplace” policy in response to Vietnam's “Doi Moi” policy. Thereafter, from 1990-1995, there were many exchange of visits between the two countries that led to several economic agreements. In the 1990s, the two countries agreed on many important issues, for example Vietnamese migrants, visa-free agreements, and maritime demarcation. In addition, the two countries also had a cultural agreement. At the international level, Thailand supported Vietnam to become a member of ASEAN in 1995. Unlike the pre-1990

period, the major powers were no longer an important factor in influencing Thailand-Vietnam relations. In the 1990s, Vietnam could no longer rely on the Soviet Union. In addition, the United States did not have diplomatic relations with Vietnam until 1995. Japan followed the United States policy of economic sanctions against Vietnam. China could not be an ally to Vietnam like the Soviet Union had been. Being a socialist country, Vietnam did not have ties outside of the communist countries. This posed a hardship for the Vietnamese economy which forced Vietnam to implement domestic reforms that would follow a more market economy. In the end, Vietnam tried to open up to the outside world. To do so, Vietnam had to turn to ASEAN which was more reliable than the major powers (the Soviet Union, China, the United States, and Japan). However, Vietnam earlier had an unfavorable view towards ASEAN. Vietnam-ASEAN relations were also bad after Vietnam invaded Cambodia. Thailand facilitated Vietnam's engagement with ASEAN. Unlike SEATO and ASA, ASEAN was not influenced by the major power countries. Besides, both Thailand and Vietnam also cooperated in sub-regional organizations, such as the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and the Mekong River Commission (MRC).

Aim of Study

Because there were many changes after the end of the Cold War, the 1990s became an important period to witness the development of bilateral relations between Thailand and Vietnam. This study aims to look into Thailand-Vietnam relations in the 1990s. It examines the important factors that helped to improve Thailand-Vietnam relations and the nature of the cooperation between the two countries in the 1990s.

There have been many sources that suggest the impetus for Thailand-Vietnam relations from conflict into collaboration came from both Thailand and Vietnam. Particularly, the Doi Moi policy of Vietnam in 1986 set the stage for the “Turning the battlefield into a market place” policy of Chatichai Choonhavan administration of Thailand. Thailand’s foreign policy under Chatichai Choonhavan was a big shift from the stance held by the earlier administration which together with ASEAN was to be hard on Vietnam because Vietnam invaded Cambodia. Thailand was considered the “front-line state” against further Vietnamese expansion. This study addresses the economic cooperation that became the theme of Thailand-Vietnam relations in the 1990s, rather than political conflicts as in many other studies. Economic cooperation led to cooperation in other areas. Economic issues served as the channel for Thailand and Vietnam to engage in many positive ways. The two countries later would agree on important political issues, which also led to an even greater economic cooperation. Aside from political and economic issues, they also had a cultural agreement. Thailand also provided technical assistance to Vietnam.

In addition, unlike the pre-1990 period, the major powers did not have much direct influence in Thailand-Vietnam relations. Rather, Thailand and Vietnam relations were influenced by regional cooperation (ASEAN) and sub-regional cooperation (GMS and MRC). Thailand and Vietnam relations improved in these organizations. Thailand had been very supportive of Vietnam’s ASEAN membership and tried to play the role as the go-between for Vietnam and other countries. The history of the establishment of regional organizations before ASEAN is discussed to show how ASEAN is different from them, which made it a plausible organization to help improve Thailand-Vietnam relations. The sub-regional cooperation also enhances people-to-people ties between the Thais and the Vietnamese.

Chapter 1 gives background on Thailand-Vietnam relations before the 1990s. This chapter traces Thailand-Vietnam relations from 1946 when Thailand was led by Pridi Phanomyong until the end of 1978 when Vietnam invaded Cambodia. The details on the establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Vietnam are also discussed.

Chapter 2 discusses Thailand-Vietnam relations in the 1990s. It illustrates the domestic needs of Vietnam that led to reform and foreign trade. This chapter also traces back relevant documents that contain the details of Vietnam foreign policy. Thailand's policy of "turning the battlefield into a market place" is also examined. The chapter then discusses the political and economic relations between Thailand and Vietnam.

Chapter 3 discusses Vietnam relations with the major powers, ASEAN, and sub-regional organizations. The chapter examines Vietnam relations with the major powers: the Soviet Union, China, the United States, and Japan. It traces efforts to establish regional organizations before ASEAN. It also demonstrates differences between those efforts and ASEAN that are important to Thailand and Vietnam relations. It looks into Thailand's role in helping Vietnam engage with ASEAN and their cooperation in sub-regional organizations.

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY OF THAILAND-VIETNAM RELATIONS

This chapter gives background on Thailand-Vietnam relations before the 1990s. It traces Thailand-Vietnam relations from 1946. At that time, Thailand was led by Pridi Phanomyong who supported independent movements. When the military came into power in 1947, Thailand sided with the United States against Communism. When the Communists won the war in 1975, negotiations between Thailand and Vietnam to establish diplomatic relations took place and succeeded on August 6, 1976. However, bilateral relations became strained again when Vietnam invaded Cambodia at the end of 1978.

Thailand-Vietnam Relations, 1946-1975

From March 24, 1946 – August 21, 1946, Thailand was under the leadership of Pridi Phanomyong.¹ Both Vietnamese who fled from French authorities and members of “independent movements of the neighboring countries” against France were given support and sanctuary by his administration.² In this period, supporting the nationalist movements in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia was the position of Thailand.³ Pridi Phanomyong’s administration supported Vietnam in many ways:

¹ Thanyathip Sripana and Trinh Dieu Thin, *Wiat kiao nai prathet thai kap khwam samphan thai-wiatnam* [Viet Kieu in Thailand and Thai-Vietnamese Relationship] (Bangkok: Sathaban echia sueksa, Chulalongkorn mahawitthayalai, 2005), 74.

² Ibid., 75.

³ Suraphong Chaiyanam, *Nayobai khong thai to wiatnam: Nayobai tangprathet thai to prathet phueanban nai yuk songkhramyen: Ha karani sueksa priapthiap* [Thai Policy towards Vietnam: Thai foreign policy towards neighbouring countries during the Cold War period: five cases in comparison] (Bangkok: Samnak phim sayam, 2017), 65.

1) The “leaders and independent movements” of Vietnam and Lao were protected by his administration. In the Northeastern region of Thailand, refuge was provided.⁴

2) The establishment of the Office of Representative and Office of Vietnam Bureau of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam based in Bangkok was “allowed” by his administration.⁵

3) The Viet Minh were supplied with arms by his administration. Because Thailand had sovereignty over Battambang in that period, the Thai administration started to use it as the point to ship arms to the Viet Minh well before the end of 1946 when the “total war” was launched against France by the Viet Minh.⁶ Because of the Thai weapons support, a letter written by Ho Chi Minh addressed to the Thai Prime Minister that he would like to call this Vietminh battalion the “Battalion of Siam”.⁷

4) Pridi initiated the Southeast Asia League⁸ Established on September 8, 1947⁹ with headquarter in Bangkok,¹⁰ the Southeast Asia League, under the leadership of Thailand, aimed to

⁴ Suphot Dantrakun, “*Naiphon singkapo kap kan aphiwat nai prawattisat lao*” [General Singapore and Revolution in Lao’s History] (Bangkok: Sathaban withthayasat sangkhom (Prathet thai)), 84, cited in Sripana and Trinh, 78-79.

⁵ Sukprida Phanomyong, *Ho Chi Minh: Thepphachao phu yang mi lomhaichai* [Ho Chi Minh: God who still have breath] (Bangkok, Samnakphim mingmit, 2006), 122-123, cited in Theera Nuchpam, “*Boribot thang prawatsat khwam samphan thai-wiatnam*” [Historical context of Thai-Vietnam relations], in *Thai nai saita phueanban* [Neighbors’ perceptions of Thailand], eds. Sunet Chutintharanon and Khanidtha Kanthawichai (Bangkok: Sun chiaochan chapho thang dan mae khong sueksa Sathaban echia sueksa, Chulalongkorn mahawithhayalai, 2013), 201.

⁶ Sukprida Phanomyong, *Ho Chi Minh: Thepphachao phu yang mi lomhaichai* [Ho Chi Minh: God who still have breath] (Bangkok, Samnakphim mingmit, 2006), 126, cited in Nuchpam, 204.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Sripana and Trinh, 84.

(Footnoted in the book that this is according to an interview at a private house in Ho Chi Minh City with Tran Van Giau who was the former President of the Anti-France Committee of South Vietnam as indicated in page 80.)

⁹ Wong Phonnikon, “*Nayobai tang prathet thi phueng prathana lae naeo khwamkhit khong than Pridi Phanomyong*” [Favorable Foreign Policy and the concept of His Excellency Pridi Phanomyong] (Bangkok: Khanakammakan damnoenngan chalong 100 pi chatkan nai Pridi Phanomyong ratthaburut awuso, 1999), 24, cited in Sripana and Trinh, 83.

¹⁰ Sripana and Trinh, 84.

promote national independence and peace, and to foster relations between independent countries and newly-independent countries in Southeast Asia by serving as liaison.¹¹

However, there was a major shift in Thai policy after 1947 when Field Marshall Pibulsongkram became Prime Minister. In exchange for various forms of assistances and benefits, Thailand joined the United States in fighting against Communism. Thus, the policy to help independent movements against France came to a halt.¹² The Bao Dai Administration was “recognized” by Pibulsongkram Administration on February 24, 1950.¹³ Also, the Office of Democratic Republic of Vietnam Representative and the Office of Vietnam Bureau were closed by Pibulsongkram.¹⁴

The Pibulsongkram administration’s anti-communist policy happened after the Communist victory in China and Communist domination in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.¹⁵ In the post-1946 period, the policy of the Thai military administration was directly shaped by the international politics against the spread of Communism, the Korean War, and the Communist victory at Dien bien Phu.¹⁶ From another angle, it is possible to observe that it was national interest, not ideology, that guided Pibulsongkram’s policy and the Thai administration from 1947 to 1973.¹⁷ Given that the United States policy was to give any support to anti-communist allies, Marshall Pibulsongkram’s willingness to fight the Communists extracted

¹¹ Ibid., 83-84.

¹² Chaiyanam, 66.

¹³ Wang Khak Nam, *Khawampenma haeng kanphatthana khwamsamphan Thai-Wiatnam (1976-2000)* [Background on the development of Thai-Vietnam relations (1976-2000)], 1st edition (Bangkok: Hanoi: Sathaban echia sueksa, Chulalongkorn mahawitthayalai; Sathan ek-akkhraratchathut na krung Hanoi, 2007), 39.

¹⁴ Ibid., 39.

¹⁵ Sripana and Trinh, 86.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Natasha Hamilton-Hart, *Hard Interests, Soft Illusions: Southeast Asia and American Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 52-53, cited in Chaiyanam, 40.

assistance from the United States.¹⁸ His political rivals were also purged by General Pibulsongkram under the guise of putting an end to the Communists.¹⁹

The Second Indochina War involved Thailand after Thailand “recognized” the Republic of Vietnam led by Ngo Dinh Diem, which was supported mainly by the United States.²⁰ However, relations between Thailand and the Republic of Vietnam came to an end when South Vietnam was defeated by the Communists in April 1975.²¹ It was from 1955-1975 that Thailand and North Vietnam were on opposing sides.

Background on the establishment of Thailand-Vietnam Relations

On May 22, 1975, soon after the fall of Saigon, Phan Hien Deputy Foreign Minister of North Vietnam with his delegation visited Thailand to discuss the establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Vietnam.²² No agreement was reached because of outstanding issues that Thailand and Vietnam could not agree on.²³ The first concerned Vietnamese refugees. In the Northeastern region of Thailand, there were around 40,000 Vietnamese migrants whom Thailand perceived as a possible security threat. Because there was no longer any war in

¹⁸ Chaianam, 39.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam*, Pbk. ed. (New York, NY: Random House, 2013), 231, 341, 469, 612, 624-630 and 709, cited in Chaianam, 43-44.

²¹ Chaianam, 77.

²² Kachatphai Burutphat, *Thai kap phueanban nai Indochin* [Thai and neighbouring countries in Indochina] (Bangkok, Samnak phim Phrae Phitthaya, 1988), 120, cited in Chulacheeb Chinwanno, "Song thotsawat khwamsamphan thai-wiatnam chak khwamkhatyaeng nai adit su khwamruammue nai patchuban" [Two Decades of Thai-Vietnam Relations from Conflict in the Past to Cooperation in the Present], in *Khwamsamphan rawang prathet thai kap wiatnam nai thotsawat patchuban lae luthang khwamruammue nai anakhot* [Thai-Vietnamese Relations in the Present Decade and Prospects for Cooperation in the Future], ed. Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, and Department of Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Thammasat Printing House, 1997), 16-17.

²³ Chinwanno, 17-18.

Vietnam, Thailand's position was that Vietnam should agree to allow them to return. However, no assurance was given by Vietnam.²⁴

The second issue was about the "ownership of aircraft and weapons" held by Thailand.²⁵ Whilst Vietnam claimed ownership and demanded that Thailand agree with this, Thailand's position was that Thailand would return them after Vietnam and the United States settled who really owned them.²⁶

Negotiations to establish diplomatic relations were held again August 3-6, 1976, after Vietnam appealed to the Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss these issues in Hanoi.²⁷ In addition to the unsettled issues on Vietnamese migrants residing in Thailand and the ownership of aircraft and weapons,²⁸ Thailand and Vietnam also had another disagreement on war reparations put forward by Vietnam.²⁹ Thailand did not consider that Vietnam won the war; therefore, there should be no reparation. Vietnam also did not fully cooperate in clarifying Thailand's claim that there was evidence that the Communist Party in Thailand was given assistance by Vietnam.³⁰ The breakthrough came when both sides agreed to establish diplomatic relations before getting back to the negotiation table on disagreements.³¹ Thailand and Vietnam established their diplomatic relations on August 6, 1976. In doing so, both agreed on four principles³² as follows:

²⁴ Ibid., 17.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 17-18.

²⁷ Ibid., 18.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 19.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Kachatphai Burutphat, *Thai kap phueanban nai Indochin* [Thai and neighbouring countries in Indochina] (Bangkok, Samnak phim Phrae Phitthaya, 1988), 124-125, cited in Chinwanno, 19.

³² Chinwanno, 19.

1. Respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.
2. Not to allow any foreign country to use one's territory as a base for direct or indirect aggression and intervention against the other and against other countries in the region.
3. Establishment of friendly and good neighbourly relations, economic cooperation and cultural exchanges on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. Settlement of disputes among the countries in the region through negotiation in a spirit of equality, mutual understanding and respect.
4. Development of cooperation among the countries in the region for the building of prosperous countries in keeping with each country's specific conditions, for the benefit of genuine independence, peace, and neutrality in Southeast Asia, thereby contributing to peace in the world.³³

Suraphong Chaiyanam observed that the meeting in 1975 between Thailand and Vietnam, represented by Phan Hien, Deputy Foreign Minister of North Vietnam, was the origin of these 4 principles. The ASEAN principle of Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) was also represented in principle number 4, although not totally.³⁴ There were some differences that should be noted. In November 1971, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, ASEAN Ministers of Foreign Affairs adopted the ASEAN principle of the Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in Southeast Asia. The gist of this principle was its focus on the role of the countries in Southeast Asia to maintain stability in the region instead of hegemonic states from other regions. "[R]espect one another's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and not participate in activities likely to directly or indirectly threaten the security of another" was another priority of the

³³ Joint Communiqué cited in Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, and Department of Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Khwasamphan rawang prathet thai kap wiatnam nai thotsawat patchuban lae luthang khwamruammue nai anakhot* [Thai-Vietnamese Relations in the Present Decade and Prospects for Cooperation in the Future], ed. Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, and Department of Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Thammasat Printing House, 1997), 244.

³⁴ Chaiyanam, 171.

ZOPFAN in the region.³⁵ Forming camps with hegemonic countries, violating domestic issues of other Southeast Asian countries either by “inviting or giving consent,” and taking part in disputes of other regions were “encouraged” to be avoided by countries in ASEAN. In addition, any military bases from abroad were to be got rid of.³⁶ As shown, the 4 principles between Thailand and Vietnam mentioned above reflected ZOPFAN in many aspects. However, the principle in number 3 also focused on economic and cultural aspects.

Presumably, because Thailand saw Vietnam as the supporter of communists in Thailand, the number one principle regarding the “non-interference” principle aimed to prevent this. On the other hand, Vietnam put forward the number two principle concerning the prohibition of “any foreign country to use one’s territory as a base,” to prevent what had happened during the Second Indochina war, when the United States took advantage of using Thailand’s air and naval bases to fight against North Vietnam.

The ascendance into power of Thanin Kraivichien after a coup d’etat on October 6, 1976, slowed down the pace of the progress made in Thailand-Vietnam relations. This was due to his “anti-Communist policy”.³⁷ Thailand-Vietnam relations returned on track when General Kriangsak Chamanan became Prime Minister in 1977. Normalization of bilateral-relations with Vietnam and establishing embassies in the capital cities of Thailand and Vietnam were two of his goals.³⁸ The visit to Thailand by Pham Van Dong the Prime Minister of Vietnam September 6-10, 1978 met with great success. Many issues were resolved by the meeting between General

³⁵ M. Ghazali bin Shafie, “The Neutralisation of Southeast Asia,” *Pacific Community* 3, no.1 (1971), 115, cited in Amitav Acharya, *The Making of Southeast Asia: International Relations of a Region*, Reprint edition, Cornell Studies in Political Economy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 166-167.

³⁶ Heiner Hanggi, “ASEAN and the ZOPFAN Concept”, *Pacific Strategic Paper* no.4 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), 25, cited in Acharya, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, 167.

³⁷ Chinwanno, 21.

³⁸ Ibid.

Kriangsak Chamanan the Prime Minister of Thailand and Pham Van Dong. On the Vietnamese migrants, unlike the stance held by Vietnam earlier, Vietnam's overture was more cooperative. To manage this issue, the establishment a Joint Commission was approved by both sides. As for the issue of aircraft and weapons, Vietnam took a very compromising stance. For Vietnam, these aircrafts and weapons were no longer important as they were no longer operational. In addition, Vietnam also showed its determination to engage constructively with Thailand by offering that Thailand keep these aircrafts and weapons. Thailand was also encouraged to ignore this issue.³⁹

However, on December 25, 1978, Vietnam invaded Cambodia. Strained relations between Thailand and Vietnam returned. In response to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, Thailand and China forged a closer alliance in opposition to Vietnam.⁴⁰

In short, this introduction chapter reveals that before the 1990s, there were times when Thailand and Vietnam had good relations. This includes the very supportive Pridi Phanomyong administration. However, as explained earlier, because of national interest, not ideology, Thailand sided with the United States to fight against Communism. This is important because it pushed Thailand and North Vietnam to be in different camps. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, their relations came to a pause for over 10 years because of Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia.

³⁹ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁰ Chaiyanam, 184.

CHAPTER TWO:

THAILAND-VIETNAM RELATIONS IN THE 1990s

This chapter discusses Thailand-Vietnam relations in the 1990s. It begins by looking back at the economic conditions in Vietnam that made economic reform necessary. The “macroeconomic crisis” pushed Vietnam to shift from the communist model to the capitalist model and opened up the country. It also reviews Vietnam’s foreign policy according to various documents from 1986. In addition, this chapter also examines Thailand’s policy of “turning the battlefield into a market place”. Finally, the political relations and the economic relations of the two countries in the 1990s are discussed.

Background on Vietnam’s Foreign Policy

The “socialist economic model” or the “centrally planned economy” guided North Vietnam’s economic policy at the start. Introduced in 1961, the “first official five-year economic development plan” or the “First Five-Year Plan” gave the blueprint for North Vietnam’s economic development.⁴¹ The First Five-Year Plan had 4 main goals: Firstly, the “socialist transformation” was to be finalized. Secondly, along with improving the industrial and the agricultural sectors, heavy industry was at the top of the agenda. Light industry, food processing, and transportation were also given importance. Thirdly, the “economic development” and “consolidation of national defense” were to be integrated. “Public order” and “security and protection of socialist development” were another focus. Fourthly, the Vietnamese were to foster

⁴¹ Tran Van Hoa, “Vietnam’s Recent Economic Performance and its Impact on Trade and Investment Prospects,” in *Economic Development and Prospects in the ASEAN : Foreign Investment and Growth in Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia*, ed. Tran Van Hoa (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 6.

“socialist culture” and “socialist consciousness.”⁴² Basic industries and capital goods productions were the main focus of Vietnam. The Soviet Union and China were the two most important countries that provided aid to Vietnam.⁴³ Whilst 20% annual increase was the aim for industrial production,⁴⁴ only 9% was determined as the aim for agricultural yield.⁴⁵ In 1960, the Vietnamese economy was composed of 58.8% agricultural sector and 41.3% industrial sector. In 1965, 49% of the Vietnamese economy was agricultural sector whilst 51% was industrial sector.⁴⁶ However, “the Second Five-Year Plan” could not be carried out because of the “bombing campaign” by the United States in 1965.⁴⁷ In contrast, a “market economic system” was followed by South Vietnam beginning in 1954. South Vietnam’s economy also received financial support from other countries especially the United States.⁴⁸

After unification, from 1976-1985, Vietnam could be described as facing a period of “macroeconomic crisis.” There were some changes made in South Vietnam’s economy in order to apply the “socialist system” there. The policy to “nationalize the industrial sector” and to “collectivize the agricultural sector” was implemented.⁴⁹ In addition, Vietnam came up with the “Second Five-Year Plan (1976-1980)”. Drafted for both North and South Vietnam, this “Five-

⁴² Kaye, W., “A Bowl of Rice Divided: The Economy of North Vietnam,” *The China Quarterly* 9, (1962), 82-93, and Nakano, Y., “Economic Condition in North Viet-Nam,” *The Developing Economies* 1, no.2, (1963), 218-231, cited in Yoon Heo, Nguyen Khanh Doanh, and Tran Nhuan Kien, *Trade and Development in Contemporary Vietnam: Doi Moi, Trade Reform, and Poverty Reduction* (Saarbrücken, Germany: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012), 13.

⁴³ Yoon, Nguyen, and Tran, 13.

⁴⁴ Nakano, Y., “Economic Condition in North Viet-Nam,” *The Developing Economies* 1, no.2, (1963), 218-231, cited in Yoon, Nguyen, and Tran, 13.

⁴⁵ Kaye, W., “A Bowl of Rice Divided: The Economy of North Vietnam,” *The China Quarterly* 9, (1962), 82-93, cited in Yoon, Nguyen, and Tran, 13.

⁴⁶ Yoon, Nguyen, and Tran, 13.

⁴⁷ Tran Van Hoa, 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Year Plan” was considered the first of its kind.⁵⁰ However, the economy of Vietnam failed miserably in this timeframe.⁵¹ The plan set an ambitious goal to reach an “annual growth rate” of 13-14%.⁵² However, in practice, only 0.4% was reached.⁵³

The second five-year plan proposed to utilize the agricultural sector in South Vietnam to support the industrial sector in North Vietnam. It failed miserably because of the opposition of farmers in the South to “collectivization”. It also failed because of the low agricultural yields to fund industrialization, the effects of the war, and the inaccurate expectation of assistance from abroad to help Vietnam revive the country after the war.⁵⁴

The United States and its allies waged war in North and South Vietnam with different goals. On the one hand, the “strategic bombing” was employed in North Vietnam. This meant the goal of the bombing was to destroy “transportation capabilities (e.g. airfields, railroads, bridges, ports, roads), as well as military barracks, industrial plants, and storage depots.” On the other hand, the “interdiction bombing” was the strategy used in South Vietnam. In other words, the bombing was used to “disrupt enemy troop movements and support U.S. ground troop operations....”⁵⁵ The disastrous effects for both North and South Vietnam from the bombing were that significant portions of infrastructures were destructed as follows: “78 per cent of power plants, 12 per cent of maritime ports, 36 per cent of railroad yards, 22 per cent of rail roads, 100

⁵⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² “General Statistical Office of Vietnam, various issues” cited in Tran Van Hoa, 8.

⁵³ Tran Hoang Kim, *Economy of Vietnam: Review and Statistics*, Hanoi, 1992, cited in Tran Van Hoa, 8.

⁵⁴ Michael C. Williams, *Vietnam at the Crossroads* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1992), 42.

⁵⁵ Tenepalli Hari, *Vietnam’s Long March from War to Development: Turning Great Power Invaders to Investors* (New Delhi: Sunrise Publications, 2007), 11.

per cent of explosive plants, 100 per cent of iron and steel plants, 90 per cent of cement plants, 23 per cent of airfields, 20 per cent of communication installations and 56 per cent of bridges.”⁵⁶

It is complicated to calculate the “cost” of Vietnam’s entanglement in Cambodia since the end of 1978. In addition to the spending to back the new administration in Phnom Penh, Vietnam lost its sources of income from China both from trade along the border and direct assistance. Even worse, Vietnam’s action in Cambodia led to being excluded from international trade.⁵⁷

Misrepresentation of the economy in Vietnam was caused by the new “bureaucratic centralized system”. The State Planning Commission drafted unrealistic production schemes. Given that there was a widening gap between official prices and market prices of goods during the market cycle, it caused state enterprises to fail, so large state subsidies were offered to save them. Because state enterprises were supplied with raw materials, their prices were pre-determined. This misrepresented the actual market price. However, it turned out that because the price of products were artificially fixed, they fell prey to companies and some state enterprises that took advantage of this condition and made a profit in the illegal market.⁵⁸

A grave economic crisis loomed for Vietnam by the end of the 1970s. There were negative growth rates in 1979 and 1980. Food grain production dropped. As much as 8-9 million tons of food was imported to Vietnam from 1976-1980 to serve domestic demand. The small rise of 6.45% of food production was mismatched with the 9.27% of population growth.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Admiral, U.S.G. Sharp, *Strategies of Defeating Vietnam in Retrospect* (U.S.A.; Presidio Press, 1998), 188, cited in Hari, 11-12.

⁵⁷ Williams, 42-43.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁹ Tran Van Hoa, 8.

As a consequence of the macroeconomic crisis, Vietnam decided to liberalize the economy, a solution put forward by the “Fifth Plenum” (“Fourth Party Congress”) in July 1979. The shift in economic policy was considered “microeconomic reforms” by “free market” economists. This policy ended the production and distribution prohibition in the agricultural sector, making it the sector with the biggest shift. The “three points contract” was implemented instead. Instead of farm cooperatives, households became the main medium to do the farming. The households agreed to receive land for a short period to farm. The designated amount and price of output must be sold to state trading agencies. The agricultural tax must also be paid. Then the household unit had the freedom to do anything with their farming surplus.⁶⁰ After 1979, this initiative proved to be successful as agricultural production rose steadily.⁶¹

The manufacturing sector also adopted a new initiative under the “Third Five-Year Plan (1981-1985)”. Instead of an assigned budget from the state, state enterprises were to look for capital from elsewhere. Then some amount of the products could be sold at open market prices instead of state regulated prices. This plan was very successful given the increase in national income of 6.4% in 1981-1985.⁶² At the same time, agricultural production rose to 5.2% and manufacturing production rose to 9.5% annually.⁶³

After 1986 Vietnamese foreign policy began to change. Vietnam became more open to trade with foreign countries regardless of political ideology. To understand Vietnamese foreign policy in the 1990s, I examined important Vietnamese documents from 1986 to 2000 as follows:

⁶⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁶¹ Ibid., 9-10.

⁶² Ibid., 10.

⁶³ Tran Hoang Kim, *Economy of Vietnam: Review and Statistics*, Hanoi, 1992, 38, cited in Tran Van Hoa, 10.

Political Report of the 6th Party Congress in 1986,⁶⁴ Resolution No.32 adopted at the Politburo Communist Party of Vietnam in June 1986,⁶⁵ Resolution No.13 adopted at the 6th Politburo in May 1988,⁶⁶ “The Strategy for Socio-Economic Stability and Development until 2000,”⁶⁷ and the Political Report of the 8th Party Congress.⁶⁸

The 6th Party Congress in 1986

One of the turning points in Vietnam was the death of Le Duan in 1986. To liberalize restrictions on markets, religion, cultural activities, and media was the preference of Nguyen Van Linh, who had views different from Le Duan. The conflict between Le Duan and Nguyen Van Linh because of the different ways they dealt with economic and cultural issues was revealed in the mid 1980s. Later, the “Doi Moi policy” was formulated by Nguyen Van Linh.⁶⁹ The Doi Moi policy was adopted at the 6th national party congress in December 1986. The policy was to shift to a capital market economy instead of a state planned economy in order to fix Vietnam’s economic crisis. In addition, investment from abroad was also a priority for Vietnam.⁷⁰ Since 1987, Vietnam became more open to international trade.⁷¹

⁶⁴ Thanyathip Sripana, “New Thinking of Vietnamese Foreign Policy towards Thailand after 1986,” in the *Twenty-Five Years of Thai-Vietnamese Relationship*, eds. Thanyathip Sripana, Theera Nuchpiam, and Pham Duc Thanh (IAS Monograph[s], no. 056. Bangkok, Thailand: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2003), 60.

⁶⁵ Quang Minh Pham, *Vietnam’s Foreign Policy in the Renovation Period, 1986-2010* (Ha Noi: The Gioi Publishers, 2015), 52-53.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 56.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 69.

⁶⁸ Carlyle A. Thayer, “Vietnamese Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution,” in the *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition*, eds. Carlyle A. Thayer and Ramses Amer (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 12.

⁶⁹ Keith Weller Taylor, *A History of the Vietnamese* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 617.

⁷⁰ Thayer, “Vietnamese Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution,” 2.

⁷¹ Williams, 49.

Two important points were indicated as never before in the Political Report of the 6th party Congress in 1986. The first point was to engage with Southeast Asian countries more cordially. The second point was to be more compromising on the regional conflict that Vietnam indirectly referred to the Cambodian conflict.⁷² Resolution No.32 was adopted at the Politburo meeting in June 1986.⁷³ In the aftermath of the war, the new direction of Vietnamese foreign policy could be traced in this resolution. The necessity that the conflict in Cambodia be settled “on the basis of peace and respect for Cambodia's independence and sovereignty” was indicated.⁷⁴ This new foreign policy also lessened the tension between Thailand and Vietnam.

The 6th Politburo

Later in May 1988, the 6th Politburo assembly adopted Resolution No.13.⁷⁵ The resolution stipulated a “multi-directional foreign policy orientation,”⁷⁶ more collaboration with countries in the region and the establishment of the “comprehensive Southeast Asia policy.”⁷⁷ Instead of the contestation between the “socialist” and the “capitalist” regimes, the so-called idea of the “who wins over who,” the new idea of “comprehensive security” was initiated by

⁷² *Vie Congres National du Parti Communiste du Vietnam* (documents) (Hanoi: Editions en langues etrangeres, 1987): 138, cited in Sripana, 60.

⁷³ Quang, 52.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷⁶ Nguyen Dy Nien, “Tiep tuc doi moi va mo cua vi su nghiep cong nghiep hoa, hien dai hoa dat nuoc”, *Tap Chi Cong San*, no.12, June 1996, 47, cited in Thayer, “Vietnamese Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution,” 2.

I know this source from reading: Thanyathip Sripana, “New Thinking of Vietnamese Foreign Policy towards Thailand after 1986,” in the *Twenty-Five Years of Thai-Vietnamese Relationship*, eds. Thanyathip Sripana, Theera Nuchpiam, and Pham Duc Thanh (IAS Monograp[h]s, no. 056. Bangkok, Thailand: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2003), 56.

⁷⁷ Quang, 56.

Resolution No.13. In sum, the resolution outlined a foreign policy that would provide Vietnam with: “a strong economy, adequate defense, and diplomacy for expanded cooperation.”⁷⁸

The 7th Party Congress

Resolution No.13 adopted at the 6th Politburo in 1988⁷⁹ and the “multi-directional foreign policy” led to a new foreign policy called “Vietnam wants to befriend all countries in the international community and to strive for peace, independence, and development,” adopted in June 1991 at the 7th National Party Congress.⁸⁰ Also, a “Strategy for Socio-Economic Stability and Development until 2000” was adopted to carry out a “multilateral foreign policy.”⁸¹ According to this strategy, Vietnam would ignore “socio-political systems” and, instead, foster economic relations with the international community under the theme “multi-lateralization and diversification.”⁸²

The 8th Party Congress

The 8th Party Congress was held in June 1996.⁸³ Despite the reforms mentioned earlier, there emerged some opposition. In fact, Vietnam’s membership in ASEAN and normalization of relations with the United States became quite controversial.⁸⁴

Since the downfall of the Soviet Union, ideological conservatives in Vietnam continuously repeated that “peaceful evolution” is endangering Vietnam.⁸⁵ Towards the end of the 1970s, China introduced the nefarious concept of “peaceful evolution.” This concept was

⁷⁸ Ibid., 57.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 56.

⁸⁰ Sripana, 57.

⁸¹ Quang, 69.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Achara Ashayagachat, “Time for Soul Searching,” *the Bangkok Post*, December 27, 1996. Factiva.

⁸⁴ Thayer, “Vietnamese Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution,” 10.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 16.

also adopted by Vietnam to refer to a pending imperialist plot. It was in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that this plot eroded Communism.⁸⁶ The concept held that capitalism and socialism have to continue to fight till one side is subdued.⁸⁷

It was in 1993-1994 that the Chinese concept of “peaceful evolution” was embraced by the Vietnamese “military.”⁸⁸ Initially mentioned in 1994, the “four dangers”⁸⁹ were identified as “the danger of falling further behind economically, the danger of deviating from the socialist direction, the scourge of corruption and mandarinism, and the plot and ‘peaceful evolution’ activities carried out by enemy forces.”⁹⁰ The party documents of the “1996 Eighth Party Congress” formally recorded these “four dangers.” Because the reform process consisted of both risks and opportunities, it was important to find the right equilibrium. The “four dangers” could help with that.⁹¹

A classified memorandum was formulated in August 1995 by Vo Van Kiet a Politburo member and the Prime Minister of Vietnam.⁹² There were many issues covered in this memorandum. In foreign relations, there were two significant successes: normalization of Vietnam-United States relations, and Vietnam’s membership in ASEAN.⁹³

⁸⁶ Eero Palmujoki, *Vietnam and the World: Marxist-Leninist Doctrine and the Changes in International Relations, 1975-93* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997), 202-3 and 206, cited in Thayer, “Vietnamese Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution,” 14.

⁸⁷ David W. P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from the Cold War to Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 162.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² “Thu Vo Van Kiet goi Bo Chinh Tri,” *Viet Luan* [Paris], no.1053 (January 5, 1996): 30-31 and 58-60, cited in Thayer, “Vietnamese Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution,” 10.

⁹³ Thayer, “Vietnamese Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution,” 10.

When this memorandum was distributed to the Politburo, it received a negative response from the conservatives. A document the conservatives produced was called “American Strategies to Transform Socialist Vietnam After the Normalization of United States-Vietnam Relations.”⁹⁴ It disagreed with Kiet’s memorandum and insisted that becoming an ASEAN member and normalizing relations with the United States was a plot to weaken Vietnam.⁹⁵ The United States wanted to stir up “democratic forces” by promoting political and economic freedom, controlling the Vietnamese market, and giving assistance to the party’s opposition. The conservatives viewed that the United States wanted to weaken the authority of the Vietnamese Communist Party.⁹⁶

Despite opposition from the conservatives, the 8th Congress endorsed a political report that included ASEAN as a cornerstone of Vietnamese foreign policy. Vietnam did not give much emphasis to this at first, but because of the advocacy of ASEAN ambassadors in Hanoi, ASEAN was mentioned in the report.⁹⁷ Among the five key goals of Vietnam foreign policy, number two stated that:⁹⁸

To do our utmost to increase our relations with neighbouring countries and other ASEAN members, constantly consolidate relations with traditional friendly countries, attach importance to relations with developed countries and economic-political centers of the world, at the same time upholding all the time the spirit of fraternal solidarity with developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Non-Aligned Movement.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Ibid., 11

⁹⁵ Ibid., 11-12.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Communist Party of Vietnam, *VIIIth National Congress Documents* (Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 1996), 78, cited in Thayer, “Vietnamese Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution,” 12.

Thanyathip Sripana, a senior researcher at the Institute of Asian Studies at Chulalongkorn University,¹⁰⁰ observed that the term in the political reports shifted from Marxist-Leninist doctrine to a capitalist tone in the 6th to 9th Party Congresses.¹⁰¹ Reviewing the 6th to 8th Party Congress mentioned earlier, this study found this observation to be accurate. Because of Vietnam's economic crisis, Vietnam tried to launch economic reforms and to open up to foreign countries for economic opportunities. Thanyathip also explained that, after 1986, although Thailand was not mentioned in the foreign policy of Vietnam, Thailand was included in Vietnam's strategy towards ASEAN. In addition, there were some positive overtures that revealed Vietnam determination's to foster good relations with Thailand regardless of the fact that the Cambodian problem had yet to be settled. First, the attempt of Laos in "building understanding and mutual confidence with Thailand" was acknowledged by the Political Report of the 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1986.¹⁰² Regardless of Thailand's uncompromising position towards Vietnamese troops in Cambodia, Vietnam's acceptance of relations between Thailand and Laos implied improvement in how Vietnam saw Thailand. Vietnam's position on relations with Thailand was also re-considered.¹⁰³ Secondly, in August 1989, Nguyen Co Thach the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam published an article "All for peace, national independence and development," which revealed his positive attitude towards the Thai policy of "turning Indochina from a battlefield into a market place".¹⁰⁴ This indicated that rapprochement between Thailand and Vietnam was a new goal in Vietnam's foreign policy. This new policy led to exchange visits: in October 1991, Vo Van Kiet Prime Minister of Vietnam paid

¹⁰⁰ Sripana, 47.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 54-55.

¹⁰² VIe Congres National du Parti Communiste du Vietnam (documents): 137-138 cited in Sripana, 62.

¹⁰³ Sripana, 62.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

a visit to Thailand to call on Anand Panyarachun the Prime Minister of Thailand who later in January 1992 paid a return visit to Vietnam.¹⁰⁵

In short, beginning in 1986, Vietnam's foreign policy became more open to all countries by prioritizing economic cooperation over political ideology. There were also attempts to apply a more capitalist approach to Vietnam's economy. Though there was some opposition to reform in Vietnam, especially on normalization with the United States and Vietnam's ASEAN membership, Vietnam still put ASEAN on the agenda in an official document. This also opened up an opportunity for Thailand and Vietnam to normalize diplomatic relations.

Background on Thailand's Foreign Policy

Turning Battlefield into Marketplace/ Less Focus on Communist Threat Under Chatichai Choonhavan

Chatichai Choonhavan, the Thai Prime Minister from 1988 to 1991,¹⁰⁶ announced the policy of "turning the Indochina battlefields into market places" given the domestic economic policy shift in Vietnam.¹⁰⁷ It was because of this policy and the resolution of the Cambodia problem that Thailand and Vietnam resumed their diplomatic relations. In 1989, all Vietnamese troops pulled out of Cambodia. The United Nations intervened in Cambodia at the beginning of the 1990s to prepare a ceasefire and elections.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 63.

¹⁰⁶ "List of Prime Ministers of Thailand," *Maps of World*, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.mapsofworld.com/list-of/prime-ministers-thailand/>.

¹⁰⁷ Amitav Acharya, *A New Regional Order in South-East Asia: ASEAN in the Post-Cold War Era*, Adelphi Paper 279 (London: Brassey's, 1993), 42.

¹⁰⁸ Taylor, 617.

Earlier, during 1980-1988, General Prem Tinsulanonda¹⁰⁹ led Thailand as Prime Minister. During his tenure, Siddhi Savetsila the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and Prasong Soonsiri the head of the National Security Council played critical roles in Thai foreign policy towards the Cambodian conflict.¹¹⁰ Political, economic, and military means were used to try to force Vietnam to withdraw its troops from Cambodia.¹¹¹ In contrast to Prem and his advisors, Chatichai Choonhavan had many work experiences in different occupations: soldier, diplomat, politician, and businessman.¹¹² He was familiar with foreign relations because he had worked as military attaché, charge d'affaires, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, and Minister of Foreign Affairs. As a result Chatichai Choonhavan had been highly involved in shaping Thailand foreign policy. In addition, he also received assistance from a group of foreign policy consultants,¹¹³ namely Kraisak Choonhavan, M.R. Sukhumphan Boriphat, Pansak Vinyaratn, Surakiart Sathirathai, Borwornsak Uwanno, Chuanchai Atchanan, and Narongchai

¹⁰⁹ Saowaphak Techasai, *Nayobai tangprathet khong thai tor klum prathet indochin nai samai ratthaban phon-ek Chatichai Choonhavan (Singhakhom 2531 – Singhakhom 2533)* [Thai foreign policy to Indochin during Chatichai Choonhavan administration (August 1988 – August 1990)], (Master Degree Thesis, Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, 1990), 53, 54, 234, 235, cited in Colin Fuangkasem, “*Nayobai tangprathet thai: si thotsawat lang songkhramlok khrang thi song (1945-1989)*” [Thailand's Foreign Policy: 4 Decades after World War 2 (1945-1989)], in *Ruam ngan khian lae pathakatha rueang kan tangprathet khong thai chak adit thueng patchuban lem thi 1* [the Compilation of Writings and Seminar on Thai Foreign Policy from the Past to the Present No.1], ed. Colin Fuangkasem, Komkrit Warakamin, Prapat Thepchatree, and Siriporn Watchawanku (Bangkok: Tarachatr Print Limited Partnership, 1999), 68.

¹¹⁰ Surachai Sirikai, “*Botbat khong phunam nai kan kamnot nayobai tangprathet: kan damnoen nayobai tangprathet khong ratthaban Chatichai Choonhavan to panha kampucha (9 Singhakhom 1988- thanwakhom 1989)*” [The Role of the Leader in Determining Foreign Policy: Implementation of Foreign Policy of Chaticha Choonhavan Administration on the Problem of Cambodia (9 August 1988-December 1989)], in *Ruam ngan khian lae pathakatha rueang kan tangprathet khong thai chak adit thueng patchuban lem thi 2* [the Compilation of Writings and Seminar on Thai Foreign Policy from the Past to the Present No.2], ed. Colin Fuangkasem, Komkrit Warakamin, Prapat Thepchatree, and Siriporn Watchawanku (Bangkok: Tarachatr Print Limited Partnership, 1999), 12.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 19.

¹¹² Saowaphak Techasai, *Nayobai tangprathet khong thai tor klum prathet indochin nai samai ratthaban phon-ek Chatichai Choonhavan (Singhakhom 2531 – Singhakhom 2533)* [Thai foreign policy to Indochin during Chatichai Choonhavan administration (August 1988 – August 1990)], (Master Degree Thesis, Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, 1990), 53, 54, 234, 235, cited in Fuangkasem, 68.

¹¹³ Fuangkasem, 68.

Akrasanee.¹¹⁴ Because of this, a more moderate approach towards the Cambodian conflict was chosen by the Chatichai Choonhavan administration.¹¹⁵

On August 25, 1988, Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan addressed the Parliament about his government's new foreign policy.¹¹⁶ One of the principal policies was:

to adjust both economic and political relations with neighboring countries, particularly the expansion of trade and the promotion of good understanding and friendship with a view to bringing about peaceful and harmonious coexistence on the basis of mutual benefits, and endeavor to promote the settlement of regional and international problems through political and diplomatic means.¹¹⁷

The speech above showed that the Chatichai Choonhavan administration wanted to improve relations with Vietnam by focusing on economic cooperation and putting an end to the Cambodian problem. In addition, this argument was also expressed by Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila who stated that “under the new government, Thailand's foreign policy regarding the major powers and neighboring countries will be balanced and more flexible, based on mutual interest. There will be changes in both political and economic policies towards neighboring countries in order to enhance understanding and ensure peace and security in the region.”¹¹⁸

Given that at the end of the Cold War foreign relations focused more on economic issues, Thailand's foreign policy under Chatichai Choonhavan shifted from security to trade.¹¹⁹ Unlike

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 68, in the author's footnote.

¹¹⁵ Sirikai, 19.

¹¹⁶ *Thailand Foreign Affairs Newsletter*, August 1988, 3.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ “1988 A Glance at Thai Foreign Affairs,” *Thailand Foreign Affairs Newsletter*, December 1988, 13.

¹¹⁹ Surin Maisrikrod, “‘The Peace Dividend’ in Southeast Asia: The Political Economy of New Thai—Vietnamese Relations,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 16, no. 1 (1994): 61.

what a number of intellectuals claimed, it was not merely about trying to deal with neighboring countries to exploit natural resources.¹²⁰ From the beginning of the 1960s, the economic direction toward industrialization in Thailand also dictated this shift in policy.¹²¹ The export industries that became prominent in the 1980s were especially important.¹²² Thailand became part of the global economy as industrialization grew. For economic growth in Thailand to be stable, Thailand had to be competitive internationally. Foreign investments now came into play to help the economy in Thailand to grow continuously.¹²³ Chatichai Choonhavan managed to tailor his policy to adjust Thailand's political economy to cope with globalization. This policy was appropriate. Because of its attractiveness, it was adopted by the following administrations under Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun and Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai.¹²⁴

The analysis above reveals that the new Thai economic policy was quite effective in terms of economic benefits Thailand received. In terms of relations between Thailand and Vietnam, it met with great success because without this policy, there could be hardly any positive interaction between the two countries. Nevertheless, as we shall see later, the end of the Cambodian dispute also was an important factor in ameliorating relations between Thailand and Vietnam. The timing was also good because in this period, Vietnam had domestic needs that forced it to engage with the outside world. At the same time, Thailand also had a new leader who understood the importance of a new policy of engagement and initiated a new economic policy that put an end to the conflict and replaced it with trade.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., 61-62.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 61.

Thailand-Vietnam Relations

Thailand-Vietnam Political Relations

First Half of the 1990s

After the Vietnamese troop withdrawal from Cambodia, Thailand-Vietnam relations became more cordial.¹²⁵ In 1989, it was the first time in thirty years that Thailand appointed trade representatives to make a visit to Vietnam.¹²⁶ On October 27-30, 1990, Nguyen Co Thach, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Vietnam paid an official visit to Thailand. A Prime Minister-level summit meeting between the two countries was suggested by Thach so that their relations could be normalized. He also raised the issue that “Thailand could play a leading role in regional cooperation” as Vietnam wanted to engage with other countries in Southeast Asia. He even mentioned that this plan for “regional cooperation” could begin regardless of the ongoing Cambodian problem. A scheme to re-establish the 1978 Joint Commission was also put forward by Thach. According to him, this would promote the bilateral economic and socio-cultural cooperation.¹²⁷ It would revitalize their cooperation that existed before Vietnam marched into Cambodia, which caused strain relations. This Vietnamese call for assistance from Thailand as a conduit to other countries showed that Thailand’s new foreign policy as the conduit was well accepted by Vietnam. The end of the third Indochina conflict and the new Thai administration under Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan paved the way for the new chapter in Thailand-Vietnam relations.

¹²⁵ Chinwanno, 24.

¹²⁶ Roger Matthews, “Thais build up links with communist neighbours,” *the Financial Times*, May 26, 1989. Factiva.

Roger Matthews, “Thais Send Trade Mission to Vietnam,” *the Financial Times*, May 19, 1989. Factiva.

¹²⁷ “Mr. Thach’s Visit to Thailand.” *Thailand Foreign Affairs Newsletter*, November 1990, 8.

Following Nguyen Co Thach's visit April 19-24, 1991, another official visit to Thailand was made by Le Mai the Deputy Foreign Minister of Vietnam. The plan to organize the first Prime Minister-level summit of the two countries was discussed. In addition, the agreement to form a "Ministerial-Level Joint Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation" was reached.¹²⁸ During September 15-17, 1991, an official visit to Vietnam was made by Arsa Sarasin, the Thai Foreign Minister. Subsequently, an agreement to establish a "Joint Commission" was signed by both parties.¹²⁹ This revealed that the two countries were heading into closer relations.

In addition to the "Joint Commission," Thailand and Vietnam continued their exchange of visits, which led to more agreements. "Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of Investments" and "Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperation in Energy and Oil" were later "signed" during Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet's visit to Thailand October 28-31, 1991. This strengthened the ties between the two countries even more.¹³⁰

During January 15-17, 1992, Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun paid an official visit to Vietnam marking the first Thailand government leader's visit since the two countries had diplomatic ties.¹³¹ The two most notable outcomes of his visit were: the agreement by both sides to set up Consulate-Generals, and the completion of the Protocol Amending the 1978 Agreement on Trade, Economic, and Technical Cooperation.¹³² On September 14, 1992, the Royal Thai Consulate-General in Ho Chi Minh City opened. In addition to "consular services", it also

¹²⁸ "Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister in Thailand." *Thailand Foreign Affairs Newsletter*, May 1991, 13.

¹²⁹ Chinwanno, 25.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ "Thai Prime Minister's Visit to Vietnam," *Thailand Foreign Affairs Newsletter*, January 1992, 7.

¹³² Ibid., 7-9.

worked to enhance trade and investment between Thailand and Vietnam.¹³³ According to *the Bangkok Post* newspaper, when Anand Panyarachun the Prime Minister of Thailand was to visit Vietnam, both parties would approve the revisions to the Accord in 1978 by removing two points: the “list of strategic goods” and a “joint trade committee.” Given the transformation in the Southeast Asian region, these revisions were necessary to keep the agreement up-to-date.¹³⁴ According to Vo Van Kiet the Prime Minister of Vietnam, Anand Panyarachun’s visit to Vietnam “Opened a new era in Vietnamese-Thai relations.”¹³⁵

The visit to Vietnam by Foreign Minister Prasong Soonsiri December 23-25, 1992, focused on “economic and trade” matters. Two agreements were signed during that visit. The first agreement was on “long term credit” worth 6 million US dollars to enable Vietnam to purchase “consumer goods and basic public utility from Thailand.” The second agreement was on “overlapping tax” exemption.¹³⁶ In many instances, investors who invest abroad had to pay taxes to more than one country as a result of the way different countries tax. In addition to the country of residence, an investor might also have to pay taxes for the country where the profit was made. Vietnam’s Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs) with other states tried to address this problem. The agreements tried to remove these taxes by determining two cases: firstly, cases that taxes could be exempted or, secondly, cases that the “taxes payable in Vietnam” could be decreased. This was basically about getting rid of double taxation.¹³⁷ For

¹³³ “Thailand opens a Mission in Ho Chi Minh City,” *Thailand Foreign Affairs Newsletter*, August 1992, 5.

¹³⁴ “Bilateral trade pact with Vietnam to be amended,” *the Bangkok Post*, January 4, 1992. Factiva.

¹³⁵ “Thailand to extend long-term credit to Vietnam,” *Asian Economic News Kyodo News International, Inc.*, January 20, 1992. Factiva.

¹³⁶ “Prasong on His First Trip as Foreign Minister to Vietnam,” *Thailand Foreign Affairs Newsletter*, September-December 1992, 12.

¹³⁷ “Introduction to Double Taxation Avoidance in Vietnam,” *Vietnam Briefing*, accessed on April 22, 2018, <http://www.vietnam-briefing.com/news/vietnams-double-taxation-avoidance-agreements.html/>

instance, for a company in the shipping or air transport sector, only one country could tax its income. In other words, either the country where the company was located or the country where the company's offices running the business were located could tax the company.¹³⁸

As we have seen, the frequent exchange of visits led to many important agreements. In the first half of the 1990s, Thailand and Vietnam focused on economic cooperation. The new policy focusing on economic cooperation created a channel for Thailand and Vietnam to foster friendlier relations. Many of the agreements in this period were on trade and investment, as shown in the table below. This helped strengthen the relations between the two countries. Economic cooperation replaced the conflict of the two countries.

Table 1: Agreements between Thailand and Vietnam from 1991-1995	
Year:	Agreement:
1991	1) Agreement on the Establish of the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation 2) Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of Investments 3) Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperation in the Natural Gas Industry
1992	1) Protocol Amendments of the Agreement on Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation 2) Agreement on a Long-Term Credit 3) Cooperation Agreement between the Office of the BOI of the Kingdom of Thailand and the State Committee for Cooperation and Investment of the SRV 4) Memorandum of Understanding on Bilateral Cooperation in Rice Production and Exportation 5) Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income 6) Co-operation Agreement between the Office of the Board of Investment of the Kingdom of Thailand and the State Committee for Co-operation and Investment of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
1993	1) Joint Cooperation Agreement between Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Vietnam and the Board of Trade of Thailand
1994	1) Agreement on Tourism Cooperation between Thailand and Vietnam 2) Agreement on Cooperation between Industrial Association of Thailand and Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Vietnam

¹³⁸ "On Avoidance of the Dreaded Double Tax," *Vietnam Investment Review*, January 2, 1995. Factiva.

1995	1) Agreement between the Ministry of Finance of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Ministry of Finance of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the Joint Subcommittee on Finance 2) Memorandum of Understanding on the Principles and Arrangements Relating to Repatriation of Vietnamese Non-Refugees from the Kingdom of Thailand 3) Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin * There was an agreements reached in 1995 that was not very relevant to economic cooperation: Memorandum of Understanding on the Principles and Arrangements Relating to Repatriation of Vietnamese Non-Refugees from the Kingdom of Thailand
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Reference: “*Khwaam toklong rawang thai kap wiatnam*” [Agreements between Thailand and Vietnam] *East Asia Watch*, accessed February 22, 2018, <http://www.eastasiawatch.in.th/th/agreement/47/>

Second Half of the 1990s

By the end of the 1990s, Thailand and Vietnam managed to reach agreements on important issues that were in areas other than on economic cooperation. These were especially those relevant to the maritime boundary, visa exemption, and Vietnamese migrants. See table 2 below, Thailand and Vietnam also signed the Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the Delimitation of the Maritime Boundary between the Two Countries in the Gulf of Thailand (1997), the Memorandum of Understanding between the Royal Thai Navy and the Vietnamese Navy on Joint Patrol Procedures in the Adjacent Maritime Areas and Establishment of Lines of Communication (1999), and the Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on Visa Exemption for Holders of Ordinary Passports (2000).¹³⁹

However, it should be noted that in 1995, both Thailand and Vietnam had already agreed on the Memorandum of Understanding on the Principles and Arrangements Relating to Repatriation of Vietnamese Non-Refugees from the Kingdom of Thailand as shown in table 1.

¹³⁹ “*Khwaam toklong rawang thai kap wiatnam*” [Agreements between Thailand and Vietnam] *East Asia Watch*, accessed February 22, 2018, <http://www.eastasiawatch.in.th/th/agreement/47/>

Table 2: Agreements between Thailand and Vietnam from 1996-2000	
Year:	Agreement:
1996	1) Cultural Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
1997	1) Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on Scientific, Technological and Environmental Cooperation 2) Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on Mutual Exemption of Visas for Holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports and Visas Facilitation for Ordinary Passports 3) Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the Delimitation of the Maritime Boundary between the Two Countries in the Gulf of Thailand
1998	1) Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on Legal and Judicial Cooperation 2) Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the Cooperation in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemicals Control
1999	1) Memorandum of Understanding between the Royal Thai Navy and the Vietnamese Navy on Joint Patrol Procedures in the Adjacent Maritime Areas and Establishment of Lines of Communication 2) Memorandum of Understanding between Radio Thailand, the Public Relations Department and Radio the Voice of Vietnam on Cooperation in Radio Broadcasting
2000	1) Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on Visa Exemption for Holders of Ordinary Passports

Reference: “*Khwam toklong rawang thai kap wiatnam*” [Agreements between Thailand and Vietnam] *East Asia Watch*, accessed February 22, 2018, <http://www.eastasiawatch.in.th/th/agreement/47/>

Among other visits by Vietnamese leaders to Thailand, on October 6-8, 1998, Tran Duc Loung, President of Vietnam, made a state visit to Thailand at the invitation of the King and Queen marking the first president of Vietnam to visit Thailand since the two countries had diplomatic ties.¹⁴⁰ This visit also led to the signing of the Agreement on Legal and Judicial Cooperation and the Agreement on Cooperation Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemicals Control.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ "State Visit of the President of Vietnam to Thailand," *Thailand Foreign Affairs Newsletter*, Vol.3, September-December 1998, 3.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

As mentioned earlier, in the second half of the 1990s, the success in reaching agreements on Vietnamese non-refugees, maritime demarcation, and visa exemption improved Thailand-Vietnam relations to a new level. Under the administration of Prime Minister Anand Punyarachun, “second-generation” Vietnamese residing in Thailand were granted Thai citizenship instead of being sent back to Vietnam. To Vietnam, this new move indicated the frankness and confidence that Thailand had in Vietnam.¹⁴² Aside from other matters, Vietnam saw the Vietnamese migrant issue as a way to foster closer Thailand-Vietnam relations.¹⁴³

In August 1997, the agreement on “maritime demarcation in the Gulf of Thailand” was reached by Thailand and Vietnam.¹⁴⁴ The conflict on maritime issue was the main obstacle in the Ministerial Meeting of the Thai-Vietnamese Joint Commission (JC). However, after many political issues were settled especially on the maritime demarcation, the two countries turned more fully to economic cooperation.¹⁴⁵

According to the agreement between Thailand and Vietnam on visa requirements, travelers with Vietnamese passports were exempted from visa-check and could stay in Thailand for 30 days.¹⁴⁶ According to the Prime Minister’s Office in charge of tourism, the Tourism Authority of Thailand had already made this agreement with Cambodia, Laos, and Burma. Vietnam was the last country among this group of countries to make this agreement with Thailand.¹⁴⁷ This group of country made the idea “Suwannabhumi” (“Golden Land”) for tourism

¹⁴² Sripana, 66.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 66-67.

¹⁴⁴ “Maritime accord with Hanoi sealed,” *the Bangkok Post*, December 28, 1997. Factiva.

¹⁴⁵ Marisa Chimprabha, “Thailand – VN ties to focus on economy,” *the Nation*, June 22, 1999. Factiva.

¹⁴⁶ “Visa rules eased for Vietnamese,” *the Bangkok Post*, July 20, 2000. Factiva.

¹⁴⁷ “New frontiers opening. Thailand-Vietnam agreement final piece of the puzzle,” *the Bangkok Post*, November 23, 2000. Factiva.

possible. In other words, the aspiration to bring back the idea of “tourism in Southeast Asia” was possible after Vietnam took part in this collective effort.¹⁴⁸

The bilateral relations between Thailand and Vietnam were further enhanced when they cooperated on cultural issues in addition to political and economic issues. In 1996, the “Agreement to promote cultural cooperation” was signed by Thailand and Vietnam. Cooperation in this agreement covered “literature, education and research, mass media, youth, sports and religion.” For Vietnam, it was considered the first agreement of this kind made with a country in Southeast Asia. For Thailand, it was the second. Before this, Thailand had signed similar agreement with the Philippines. According to the Vietnamese Culture and Information Minister, “the agreement will provide our two peoples with a firm basis for closer and wider cooperation in the cultural field, thus paving the way for the expansion of mutually beneficial cooperation in other areas.”¹⁴⁹

In addition, Thailand also played a crucial role in giving Vietnam technical support. In the past, Thailand had secured a budget of around 20-30 million baht dedicated for other countries as financial aid. However, in 1992, under the leadership of Anand Panyarachun, the Prime Minister of Thailand, the budget rose to 175 million baht. Countries in Indochina and Burma were countries that this aid was intended to support.¹⁵⁰ Since 1992, Vietnam has officially received aid from Thailand.¹⁵¹ At that time, 19 million baht were given to Vietnam.¹⁵² There was

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Saritdet Marukatat, “Pact boosts relations with Hanoi,” *the Bangkok Post*, August 9, 1996. Factiva.

¹⁵⁰ Chalermpon Ake-Uru, “*Khwamsamphan thang setthakit rawang thai kap wiatnam*” [Economic Relations between Thailand and Vietnam], in *Khwamsamphan rawang prathet thai kap wiatnam nai thotsawat patchuban lae luthang khwamruammue nai anakhot* [Thai-Vietnamese Relations in the Present Decade and Prospects for Cooperation in the Future], ed. Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, and Department of Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Thammasat Printing House, 1997), 96.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 95.

a breakthrough in 1994 when “Thailand-Vietnam Country Programme for Development Cooperation 1995-1997” and “Minutes of Discussion on Vietnam-Thailand Development Cooperation Programme” were signed.¹⁵³ This made aid to Vietnam from Thailand more systematic.¹⁵⁴ The pledges of aid for Vietnam for the Country Programme in this first phase was 150 million baht and focused on: education, health, agriculture, transport, and industry. Later, in 1997, the second phase of the Country Programme (1998-2000) was approved. Science and technology, tourism, and narcotics were the three new areas included in this new phase.¹⁵⁵

“Modernization” in Vietnam was enhanced by its cooperation with Thailand on science, technology and environment. The cooperation in this area was significantly promoted by the 1997 Agreement on Scientific, Technological, and Environmental Cooperation between Thailand and Vietnam. There were many initiatives underway between the two countries in this field, such as “meteorology, hydrography, postharvest technology, biotechnology, training and development of scientific and technological information personnel of Vietnam, industrial patent, oil spills prevention, and management, etc.”¹⁵⁶

The relations between Thailand and Vietnam expanded into a wide variety of areas. The history of their relations was also important and became a symbol of their friendship. According to *the Bangkok Post* newspaper, in 2000, Phan Van Khai, Prime Minister of Vietnam, traveled to a village that Ho Chi Minh used to reside called Ban Na Jok. Since August 1976 when Thailand and Vietnam established their ties, there had been no other Vietnamese leader who traveled there but Khai. He was welcomed by the local Vietnamese. In addition to the 100-year-old shrine or

¹⁵² Ibid., 97.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 98-99.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 98.

¹⁵⁵ Achara Ashayagachat, “Thai-Vietnamese relations - Maturing ties stimulate progress,” *the Bangkok Post*, August 6, 1997. Factiva.

¹⁵⁶ Wang, 207.

Dai Vuong, the place where Ho Chi Minh stayed was also visited. At the back of this place, Khai planted a banyan tree. He also met with villagers. The newspaper noted that a statement in Vietnamese was made by Khai that “Ban Na Jok and the shrine would be eternal symbols of Thai-Vietnamese friendship.”¹⁵⁷

There were many royal and official visits from Thailand to Vietnam as well as official visits from Vietnam to Thailand between 1990-2000. For the royal family, there were visits by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn (in 1992 and in 1997 when His Royal Highness Crown Prince piloted his personal plane), Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn (1993, 2000), Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana Krom Luang Naradhiwas Rajanagarindra (1994), and Her Royal Highness Princess Chulabhorn (1998). There were also visits by Thai Prime Ministers: Anand Panyarachun (1992), Chuan Leekpai (1994), Banharn Silpa-archa (1995), and Chavalit Yongchaiyudh (1997). As for the Vietnam side, President Tran Duc Luong made a state visit in 1998. There were also official visits by Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet (1991) and Prime Minister Phan Van Khai (2000).¹⁵⁸ The visits by the Thai Royal family and the Thai head of administration as well as the high-level visits by Vietnamese showed the close ties between the two countries.

Thailand-Vietnam Economic Relations

Political and social issues were the main obstacle that hindered trade between Thailand and Vietnam during 1980-1988.¹⁵⁹ From 1985-1990, trade between Thailand and Vietnam

¹⁵⁷ “Thai-Vietnamese relations,” *the Bangkok Post*, May 12, 2000. Factiva.

¹⁵⁸ “*Khwaam samphan thawiphakhi rawang thai kap wiatnam*” [Bilateral relations between Thailand and Vietnam], *East Asia Watch*, accessed February 23, 2018, <http://www.eastasiawatch.in.th/th/relationship/48/>

¹⁵⁹ Ha Huy Thanh, “Thailand’s trade with and direct investment in Vietnam,” in *Khwaamsamphan rawang prathet thai kap wiatnam nai thotsawat patchuban lae luthang khwaamruammue nai anakhot* [Thai-

increased dramatically because of changes in both Thailand and Vietnam.¹⁶⁰ Under the fast-growing economy in Thailand between 1987-1988, exports increased and domestic production required a higher amount of raw materials.¹⁶¹ As for Vietnam, there was a dramatic shift in many areas under the Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in December, 1986.¹⁶² As a consequence, to fulfill other objectives, the widening of economic relation with foreign countries became a priority.¹⁶³

As mentioned earlier, the new policy of Chatichai Choonhavan was announced in 1988 so it is worth looking at the trade volume between Thailand and Vietnam thereafter. There were substantial “economic links” between Thailand and the Indochinese countries and “Thailand and Vietnam agreed to set up a joint commission for economic and trade cooperation in December 1989.”¹⁶⁴ Comparing the trade between Thailand and Vietnam in 1988 and in 1990, there was a significant increase with the volume of 350.2 million baht in 1988 to 2,862.7 million baht in 1990.¹⁶⁵ According to tables 3 and 4 below, the total trade value between Thailand and Vietnam continued to increase each year from 1990 to 2000. According to table 3, in 1990 the total bilateral trade value was only 69.42 million US dollars. It then skyrocketed to 508.87 million US dollars in 1995.

Vietnamese Relations in the Present Decade and Prospects for Cooperation in the Future], ed. Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, and Department of Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Thammasat Printing House, 1997), 116.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 117.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., 116.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 117.

¹⁶⁴ Acharya, *A New Regional Order in South-East Asia*, 47.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Table 3: Thailand-Vietnam Trade Relations 1990-1995 (In million US dollars)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Export	52.34	57.75	71.50	71.67	39.41	42.95
Import	17.08	14.23	14.22	95.11	255.20	465.92
Trade Balance	35.06	43.52	57.28	-23.44	-215.79	-422.97
Total Value	69.42	71.98	112.72	166.78	394.61	508.87
Growth Rate		3.7%	56.6%	47.9%	76.6%	72.7%

* Please note that this table is from Vietnam's perspective.

Reference: Vietnam Customs Hanoi 2002 cited in Wang Khak Nam, *Khwampenma haeng kanphatthana khwamsamphan Thai-Wiatnam, 1976-2000*[Background on the improvement of Thai-Vietnam relations, 1976-2000] (Krung Thep : Hanoi: Sathaban Echiasuksa, Chulalongkonmahawitthayalai ; Sathan Ekakkhraratchathut na Krung Hanoi, 2550), 158.

There were a small number of countries that initially invest in Vietnam and Thailand was one of them.¹⁶⁶ Thailand invested in Vietnam 455 million US dollars, making Thailand the 13th top country to invest in Vietnam in December 1995.¹⁶⁷

Table 4: Thailand-Vietnam Trade Relations 1995-2000 (In million US dollars)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Export	42.95	66.63	191.07	295.26	312.73	388.90
Import	465.92	586.54	568.07	673.67	556.26	868.99
Trade Balance	-422.97	-519.91	-377.00	-78.41	-243.53	-480.09
Total Value	508.87	653.17	759.14	968.93	868.99	1,201.84
Growth Rate	72.7%	28.3%	15.3%	27.6%	10.3%	38.3%

* Please note that this table is from Vietnam's perspective.

Reference: Vietnam Customs Hanoi 2002 cited in Wang Khak Nam, *Khwampenma haeng kanphatthana khwamsamphan Thai-Wiatnam, 1976-2000*[Background on the improvement of Thai-Vietnam relations, 1976-2000] (Krung Thep : Hanoi: Sathaban Echiasuksa, Chulalongkonmahawitthayalai ; Sathan Ekakkhraratchathut na Krung Hanoi, 2550), 196.

Thailand and Vietnam set the target of trade value between the two countries to be 1,000 million US dollars by 1997. However, this target was not met because of the Asian financial

¹⁶⁶ Nguyen Si Xung, "20 Years of Viet-Thai Relations," in *Khwamsamphan rawang prathet thai kap wiatnam nai thotsawat patchuban lae luthang khwamruammue nai anakhot* [Thai-Vietnamese Relations in the Present Decade and Prospects for Cooperation in the Future], ed. Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, and Department of Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Thammasat Printing House, 1997), 145.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

contagion in 1997.¹⁶⁸ According to table 4, in 1997, the total trade value between Thailand and Vietnam was 759.14 million US dollars. It was not until 2000 that the total trade value between the two countries could reach, indeed surpass, the 1,000 million US dollars target. As shown in table 4, the total trade value in 2000 was 1,201.84 million US dollars.

Given the focus on the expansion of the industrial sector, Vietnam imported a large amount of materials for production. Vietnam imported the following goods: “Motorcycles CKD and IDK types, plastic resins, many kinds of oil, machinery, spare parts, raw materials, textiles, animal skin, iron, various kinds of steel, pharmaceutical drugs,..., computers, electronic circuits, cars, chemical fertilizers, etc.”¹⁶⁹

As for exports, a large amount of electric and electronic devices were exported from Vietnam. “Electric wires, electric cables, shoes, clothes, computers and gadgets, motorcycles and spare parts, plastic productions, productions from milk, and furniture” were the goods that Vietnam increasingly exported. In addition, Vietnam also exported the following goods: “raw materials and processed agricultural products” which were “crude oil, coal, peanuts, rubber, coffee, pepper, tea, aquatic animals, vegetables, and fruits.”¹⁷⁰

There were some challenges in the trade between Thailand and Vietnam. The first challenge was the incompatible trade between Thailand and Vietnam. Vietnam had a large trade deficit with Thailand for a long period.¹⁷¹ The second challenge was that Thailand and Vietnam traded in small value with one another. Among trade with other countries, Thailand’s export to

¹⁶⁸ Wang, 196.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 196-197.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 197.

¹⁷¹ Nguyen Xuan Thang (2001), “*25 Pi haeng khwam samphan thang setthakit thai wiatnam lae khwamwang panha setthakit lok*” [25 Years of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Vietnam-Thailand and hope of various problems about the global economy] (Volume. 472), Hanoi, 28-29, cited in Wang, 197.

Vietnam and Vietnam's export to Thailand accounted for only 1% and 23%, respectively.¹⁷² The third challenge was the competition between the two countries resulting from the similarity in their products. Some examples of these products were rice, aquatic animals, and textiles. This could potentially lead to trade competition, which could affect ties between the two countries.¹⁷³

In short, this chapter shows that Thailand-Vietnam relations in the 1990s were led by economic cooperation. In the 1980s, Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia played a big part in poor bilateral relations. However, because of the new initiatives both in Thailand and Vietnam, the economic cooperation opened up the way for improvement in their relations. Vietnam came to the realization first from domestic problems. To solve the economic crisis in Vietnam at the end of the 1970s, Vietnam became more flexible and turned toward the market economy. From 1986, Vietnam became more open to other countries for economic opportunities. At the same time, Thailand reaped gains from Vietnam's more open economy. In the first half of the 1990s, most agreements were about economic cooperation. However, by the second half, there were more agreements concerning other issues. The agreements on Vietnamese non-refugees, maritime demarcation, and visa-exemption showed the improvement in their relations. In addition, the high-level exchange of visits also symbolized their amicable relations. However, I agree with Thanyathip that the agreements reached in the 1990s were significant in the foreign relations between Thailand and Vietnam. As Thanyathip noted, there must have been elements of sympathy, cordial ties, and confidence between Thailand and Vietnam in order to reach these agreements in the 1990s. Also in the late 1990s, both countries agreed on solving volatile political issues. Vietnamese refugees were granted Thai citizen, and maritime disputes were

¹⁷² Nguyen Tuong Lai (2001), *khwaam samphan thai wiatnam nai chuang pi 1990* [Thailand-Vietnam relations in the 1990 period] Khoa hoc xa hoi Publication, Hanoi, 174, cited in Wang, 198.

¹⁷³ Wang, 198.

resolved.¹⁷⁴ I have clearly shown that during the first half of the 1990s, most agreements reached were about economic cooperation. They opened up channels to foster more friendly relations. This proved to be successful when years later many issues were also resolved, which led to closer ties in other areas. What began with economic cooperation turned into cooperation in broader areas after the conflict in Cambodia was resolved.

¹⁷⁴ Sripana, 65.

CHAPTER THREE:

VIETNAM RELATIONS WITH MAJOR POWERS, ASEAN, AND
SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

This chapter examines Vietnam relations with the major powers, ASEAN, and sub-regional organizations. Regarding Vietnamese relations with major powers, we see that Vietnam could not rely on the Soviet Union as it did earlier. Trying to approach China also posed a “security dilemma” for Vietnam and, in fact, China was not so reliable. The United States also did not have diplomatic relations with Vietnam until 1995. Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia and the issue on the prisoner of war and missing in action (POW/MIA) were also reasons that made the United States to impose sanctions on Vietnam. As for Japan, many policies were implemented that followed the United States leadership. This chapter traces back organizations established before ASEAN. These organizations are SEATO and ASA. One important aspect that made ASEAN different from ASA and SEATO was ASEAN was considered to be less prone to be labeled as Western-oriented. As the major powers were unreliable, Vietnam fostered good relations with ASEAN instead. Thailand-Vietnam relations were also enhanced by ASEAN. Thailand played a critical role in the relations between Vietnam and ASEAN. Thailand-Vietnam relations also expanded in the sub-regional organizations, namely the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and the Mekong River Commission (MRC).

Relations between Vietnam and the Major Powers

The Soviet Union

The Soviet Union had faced the “quintuple loss” in 1989-1991.¹⁷⁵ Firstly, the Soviet Outer Empire came to an end. As a member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA/Comecon) since 1978, Vietnam relied heavily on imports from members of CMEA.¹⁷⁶ This accounted for about three quarters of its imports in the middle of the 1980s.¹⁷⁷ Vietnam had to change its trade policy after CMEA ended in mid-1991.¹⁷⁸ Secondly, the status of the Soviet Union as a global hegemon was diminished. This also led to the fall of the Warsaw Pact in 1991, which was a military alliance led by the Soviet Union. It served as the balance of power with the other superpower in the Western World, even though Vietnam did not join the Warsaw Pact, a weakened Soviet Union was not thought to be good for Vietnam.¹⁷⁹ Thirdly, a lot of the Central and Eastern European countries and some former members of the Soviet Union replaced the Soviet Communist model with liberal-democratic capitalist economies.¹⁸⁰ Fourthly, the Soviet Union could no longer serve as the model for socialism.¹⁸¹ Because Vietnam could not find any Communist country that could be its role-model in Europe or Asia, Communism seemed to be at a dead end.¹⁸² Vietnam could not manifestly adopt the Maoist model of China because of its enmity with China in the past. Although there remains the Communist Party in China, in the beginning of 1990s, China had also adopted many features of the West both socially and

¹⁷⁵ Leslie Holmes, “Vietnam in a Comparative Communist and Postcommunist Perspective,” in *Vietnam’s New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*, 1st ed. The CERI Series in International Relations and Political Economy, eds. Stephanie Balme, Mark Sidel, and Groupe d’études sur le Vietnam contemporain, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 11.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 11 and 13.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid., 13-14.

economically. For example, the Chinese government allowed the private leasing of state-owned enterprises. This compromised important features of the Maoist model of China.¹⁸³ A model that is free from domination by other countries is more appealing for Vietnam because of the past experience of Vietnam under colonization.¹⁸⁴

The party documents of the 7th congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party in June 1991 touched upon the issue of relations between the Soviet Union and Vietnam very slightly. Instead, the Congress adopted a political programme that did not mention anything about the relations between the two countries.¹⁸⁵ According to Michael Williams, “[t]he section on foreign policy in the political report, for example, speaks only of relations between Vietnam and the Soviet Union ‘being renewed in accordance with the interests of each people’. 7th *National Congress*, p. 89; the Political Programme is even vaguer and talks only of consolidating and developing ‘the traditional relations of friendship and cooperation with other socialist countries’. Ibid., p. 61”¹⁸⁶

There were also indications from the Soviet Union that it would downgrade the importance of relations with Vietnam. The first indication is the statement delivered by Gorbachev in Vladivostok in July 1986 and in Krasnoyarsk in September 1988. In 1978, the two countries had signed the Treaty of Friendship. Thereafter, they had friendly ties. However, Gorbachev’s statements revealed the “new thinking” of its position on Asia. As a consequence, Vietnam was not confident that the Soviet Union would be committed to its ties with Vietnam as it had been in the past. The second indication is the normalization of relations with China by the

¹⁸³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 13.

¹⁸⁵ Williams, 66.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 100. See footnote 13 Chapter 5 “The foreign policy context”.

Soviet Union in 1989. And the third indication is the intense involvement of the Soviet Union in the Security Council on the Cambodian problem.¹⁸⁷

China

The peace agreement on the Cambodian conflict was reached on October 23, 1991.¹⁸⁸ Because of the acceptance of the agreement by Vietnam, it opened the door for normalization of relations between Vietnam and China.¹⁸⁹ Given the downfall of the Soviet Union and no diplomatic relations with the United States, Vietnam was more open than China to normalize their bilateral relations.¹⁹⁰ After the end of the Cold War, Vietnam's security dilemma dictated rapprochement with China. To legitimize its Communist rule, Vietnam wanted to have good relations with a crucial Communist country like China. However, without the Soviet Union to balance China, Vietnam became vulnerable given that China had unsettled territorial conflicts with Vietnam. In addition, China's hugeness and geo-political location were worrisome for Vietnam.¹⁹¹

Following the Tiananmen suppression in June 1989, China was isolated by the international community. China was consequently interested in normalizing relations with Vietnam. This led to the secret negotiations between Vietnam and China in September 1990 in Chengdu.¹⁹² The outcome of the meeting was more exchanges between the two countries, notably when General Vo Nguyen Giap attended the Asian Games in Beijing, China,¹⁹³ in

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 66.

¹⁸⁸ Elliott, 123.

¹⁸⁹ Williams, 68.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 68-69.

¹⁹¹ Elliott, 88.

¹⁹² Tatsumi Okabe, "Coping with China," in *Vietnam Joins the World*, ed. James William Morley and Masashi Nishihara, eds. (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 122.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 122.

1990.¹⁹⁴ There were probably many reasons that motivated China to engage with Vietnam. When the Cambodia conflict was settled, gaining recognition from Southeast Asian countries became the policy that China would pursue like never before since 1949.¹⁹⁵ This means China was not interested in prolonging bad relations with Vietnam, especially when the Cambodian conflict was about to be settled.¹⁹⁶ As such, China saw Vietnam as a part of its strategy to open up relations with countries in Southeast Asia.

After the Paris Peace Agreement was reached in October 1991, Do Muoi the General Secretary of Vietnam and Vo Van Kiet the Prime Minister of Vietnam visited China and on November 5, 1991, relations between Vietnam and China were normalized.¹⁹⁷ In fact, earlier in July 1991, General Le Duc Anh, a member of the Vietnamese Politburo, had traveled to China to prepare for normalization.¹⁹⁸ Later in September, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam traveled to China again to finalize negotiations.¹⁹⁹ According to the joint declaration of relations between China and Vietnam, “Vietnam-China relations will abide by the principles of respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and mutual nonaggression and noninterference in each other's internal affairs...Relations between Vietnam and China are not an alliance relationship, and will not return to the relationship of the 1950s and 1960s”²⁰⁰ which could be interpreted that the relationship between the two countries was not so cordial. In addition, there remained the dispute on border demarcation and ownership of the Paracel and

¹⁹⁴ Charles P. Wallace, “Diplomacy/Asian Détente: Warming Up at Beijing Games,” Los Angeles Times, October 5, 1990. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/docview/1460350186?accountid=10267>

¹⁹⁵ Williams, 70.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 70.

¹⁹⁷ Elliott, 123, and Williams, 70.

¹⁹⁸ Williams, 70.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 70.

²⁰⁰ Hoi Ky Tran Quang Co [Tran Quang Co's memoir], <https://www.diendan.org/tai-lieu/ho-so/hoi-ky-tran-quang-co/>, cited in Elliott, 123.

Spratly islands.²⁰¹ Vietnam and China still had unsettled territorial claims, which became a problem that affected their relations for several years after their normalization in 1991. Not until a decade later was this territorial contestation settled.²⁰² In addition, although a credit of 14 million dollars was little, China spent a year after rapprochement to decide to grant it to Vietnam.²⁰³ For Vietnam, the Soviet Union was to a larger extent more reliable than China. To have more friendly ties with countries that were not Communist thus was the solution. The countries in Southeast Asia and the United States were specifically two of the most important targets.²⁰⁴

The United States

The United States did not have diplomatic relations with Vietnam until July 11, 1995.²⁰⁵ In the past, there were no regular bilateral ties between the United States and Vietnam. It was not until the Paris Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict was signed by Vietnam in 1991 that one important impediment to normalization was removed.²⁰⁶

In fact, the United States had a legitimate reason to place an economic embargo on Vietnam after Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978.²⁰⁷ In the period of French colonization in Vietnam, some regions of Vietnam were embargoed economically by the United States for the first time.²⁰⁸ The United States retaliated against Communist states that provided assistance to

²⁰¹ Williams, 71.

²⁰² Elliot, 123.

²⁰³ “China provides first economic aid since 1970s to Vietnam,” Agence France Presse, December 2, 1991, cited in Elliot, 123.

²⁰⁴ Elliott, 123.

²⁰⁵ Frederick Z. Brown, “U.S.-Vietnam Normalization-Past, Present, Future,” in *Vietnam Joins the World*, ed. James William Morley and Masashi Nishihara, eds. (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 200.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 202.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 205.

²⁰⁸ Vladimir N. Pregelj, Robert G. Sutter, Alan K. Yu, and Larry Q. Nowels, *Vietnam: Procedural and Jurisdictional Questions Regarding Possible Normalization of U.S. Diplomatic and Economic Relations*

North Korea and China by suspending the Most Favored Nations (MFN) status as obliged by the Trade Agreements Extension Act of 1951.²⁰⁹ When Vietnam was split into two parts in accordance with the Geneva Accords 1954, the United States still continued to impose an embargo on North Vietnam.²¹⁰ After the fall of Saigon in 1975, the United States placed identical sanctions on the unified Vietnam.²¹¹

In 1991, the “roadmap for normalization” between the United States and Vietnam was announced. It set out “reciprocal steps in the normalization process.” If Vietnam followed this, it would gain something in return. However, some analysts deemed this unjust since the United States could set its own condition.²¹²

Under the leadership of Ronald Reagan, the United States demanded that Vietnam pull out its troops from Cambodia.²¹³ The prisoner of war and missing in action (POW/MIA) and other humanitarian issues were the main issues that the United States raised for Vietnam to address. The extent of its willingness to work with the United States determined the “pace and scope” in their rapprochement.²¹⁴ It was not until February 3, 1994, that the United States lifted the economic embargo on Vietnam.²¹⁵

(Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress 94-633 S, August 4, 1994), cited in Brown, 203.

²⁰⁹ Brown, 203.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid, 205.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 211.

Japan

Japan's foreign policy on Southeast Asia was shown in a speech delivered by Takeo Fukuda in Manila in August 1977 known as the "Fukuda Doctrine." There were three points in this doctrine. Firstly, military capability is not the path Japan is pursuing; instead Japan advocated for peace. Secondly, Southeast Asia will be engaged by Japan in a way called the "heart-to-heart relationship" in all aspects: political, economic, and socio-cultural. Thirdly, ties between ASEAN and Indochinese countries will be given support by Japan.²¹⁶ However, the Fukuda doctrine could not be carried out if the United States came into disagreement with Japan's new approach to Indochinese countries. Also, this doctrine could not be implemented if Japan had to be involved in political or military or entanglements with hegemonic states.²¹⁷ Both of these proved to be the case, which caused the failure of the Fukuda doctrine. After normalizing relations with China in May 1978, the United States postponed its rapprochement with Vietnam.²¹⁸ In addition, the conflict in Indochina was still fragile because of the contestation for influence between China and the Soviet Union. By the end of 1977, the Khmer Rouge ended relations with North Vietnam. However, the Khmer Rouge was backed by China. In the meantime, the Soviet Union was approached by Vietnam. In June 29, 1978, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) which was led by the Soviet Union accepted Vietnamese membership, and on November 3, 1978, the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union was signed by Vietnam. Because the local Chinese were not handled well by Vietnam during the spring of 1978, it affected ties with China. This led to the postponement

²¹⁶ Yoshihide Soeya, "Vietnam in Japan's Regional Policy," in *Vietnam Joins the World*, ed. James William Morley and Masashi Nishihara, eds. (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 176.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 180.

²¹⁸ Sadako Ogata, *Normalization with China: A Comparative Study of U.S. and Japanese Processes* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1988), 66-71, cited in Yoshihide, 180.

of China's assistance to Vietnam in July 1978.²¹⁹ Then in December 1978, Vietnam occupied Cambodia, and, in February 1979, Vietnam was attacked by China.²²⁰

Japan cooperated with the United States in dealing with Vietnam on the Cambodian conflict by imposing economic sanctions on Vietnam and by working on the prisoners of war and missing in action (POW/MIA) matter. Though the Japanese people did not admire Japanese government policy to get involved in the prisoners of war and missing in action (POW/MIA) issue, the Japanese government still cooperated with the United States.²²¹ Whilst negotiations on the Cambodian conflict were in progress, the United States agreed with Japan, in November 1992, that the suspended Official Development Assistance (ODA) of Japan to Vietnam could be revived. It was for commodity loans worth 45.5 billion yen.²²²

After the Cold War ended, the “Fukuda doctrine,” particularly the concept of trying to help Vietnam and Indochinese countries to open their relations with the region, became the central policy of Japan once again. In May 1991, Toshiki Kaifu, the Prime Minister of Japan, said in Singapore that “true peace and prosperity in entire Southeast Asia would become enduring when peace comes back to Indochina and its exchanges with ASEAN expand greatly in the future”.²²³

Japan's attempt to implement the “Fukuda doctrine” once again became more obvious by October 1991 after the dispute in Cambodia was resolved. In January 1993, the “Forum for

²¹⁹ Yoshihide, 180.

²²⁰ Ibid., 181.

²²¹ Ibid., 189-190.

²²² Ibid., 191.

²²³ “*Kaifu sori no ASEAN-shokoku homon ni okeru seisaku enzetsu: Nihon to ASEAN-shin-jidai no seijukushita patonashippu wo motomete*” [Policy speech by Prime Minister Kaifu on his visit to ASEAN countries: Japan and ASEAN-in Search of a Mature Partnership in a New Era], Singapore, May 3, 1991, cited in Yoshihide, 193.

Comprehensive Development of Indochina” was put forward by Japan as Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa stated in Bangkok that:²²⁴

The conclusion of the Cambodian Peace Accords opens the way not only to Cambodian reconstruction but also to the promotion of the policy of openness by Vietnam and Laos. It thus makes it possible for Southeast Asia, which consists of the countries of ASEAN and Indochina, to develop as an integral whole. Such development has consistently been the goal of Japan’s Indochina policy since 1977, when Prime Minister Fukuda articulated in Manila Japan’s policy of contributing to the building of peace and stability in the whole of Southeast Asia by expanding the scope of mutual cooperation and understanding throughout the region....

...To this end, I should like to propose establishing a “Forum for Comprehensive Development of Indochina”²²⁵

Pre-ASEAN Establishment Period

SEATO

The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was an idea of the United States to create a regional alliance that would favour the United States against the Communists. Playing a critical role in its creation, the United States at first did not want to take a lead in the creation of a regional alliance for fear that it will end up being labeled as an “imperialist intervention.” Instead, the United States preferred an indirect support for an alliance with countries in the region. However, in the end the United States had to take the lead given the increase of Communist domination in Indochina.²²⁶

It could also be said that SEATO was an outcome of a debate between the United States and the United Kingdom. John Foster Dulles, the U.S. Secretary of State, had been advocating for a collective defence treaty in response to Communist belligerence prior to and also during the

²²⁴ Yoshihide, 193.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Acharya, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, 134.

1954 Geneva Conference whereas the United Kingdom preferred to discuss this after the Geneva Conference ended as it might derailed the conference. A non-aggression pact that would cover many Asian states, as well as India, was also more preferable to the United Kingdom. Unlike the United Kingdom, Dulles opined that any favorable outcome from the conference was unlikely. The United States finally decided to form a SEATO without the idea of a non-aggression pact favored by the United Kingdom and without the unified field command that the United States wanted.²²⁷

Established in 1954 under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (The Manila Pact), SEATO was composed of eight members: Thailand, the Philippines, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, France, and Pakistan.²²⁸ According to Donald Weatherbee:

The operative heart of the Manila Pact stated that the parties to the treaty recognized that aggression by armed attack in the treaty area on a party to the treaty or any state or territory unanimously designated by the parties would endanger the peace and safety of all. In that event, they would consult to meet the common danger. A separate protocol brought Laos, Cambodia, and the “free territory” of Vietnam under the SEATO cover. In an understanding to the agreement, the United States stated that the treaty obligations only applied to communist aggression.²²⁹

During 1961-1962, the attack by the communist Pathet Lao forces on the neutral Royal Lao Government alarmed Thailand. However, SEATO could not come into play because there was no unanimity among its members. In the end, a bilateral agreement, the Thanat-Rusk

²²⁷ Ibid., 136.

²²⁸ Donald E. Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy*, Third edition, Asia in World Politics (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 65.

²²⁹ Ibid.

Communique was reached in 1962 between Thailand and the United States.²³⁰ This agreement bypassed SEATO; the United States would aid Thailand if war broke out.

The concern was that the Communists could take over neutral Laos and Thailand would become the next target of infiltration and attack. Because SEATO would only take any move if there is unanimity of all seven members, Thailand was worried that SEATO would not be helpful if Thailand were attacked by the Communists. This was why in March 1962, Thanat Khoman the Thai Foreign Minister and Dean Rusk the Secretary of State of the United States signed a “communique” to calm Thailand.²³¹

Becoming an independent state in accordance with the Geneva Accords in 1954, Laos was administered by the Royal Lao government led by Prince Souvanna Phouma. This administration to some extent was partial towards the West. The Geneva Accords also allotted two “provinces” in Eastern Laos to the Pathet Lao,²³² a term coined by the Americans referring to the Laotian Communists.²³³

Under the stewardship of Prince Souphanouvong, the Pathet Lao was supported by the North Vietnamese. There was also an attempt by Prince Souvanna Phouma to follow a neutralist foreign policy by creating a coalition government composed of the Royal Lao government and the Pathet Lao. However, the plan was turned down by the United States.²³⁴

²³⁰ Ibid., 66.

²³¹ Kenworthy, E.W., “Thailand Defense is pledged by U.S.,” *the New York Times*, March 7, 1962. ProQuest.

²³² George Moss, *Vietnam, an American Ordeal*, 6th ed, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 80.

²³³ Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia* (New York: Vintage, 1984), 159, cited in Moss, 80.

²³⁴ Hess, Gary R., *Vietnam and the United States* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 69, cited in Moss, 80.

Prince Souvanna Phouma was later removed by President Eisenhower in 1959 and replaced with General Phoui Sannikone to lead a new administration favouring the West. Prince Souphanouvong was arrested and put into prison.²³⁵

Captain Kong Le toppled General Sananikone's government in August 1960 and persuaded Prince Souvanna to head a new neutralist government. However, General Sananikone fought back with support from the United States and successfully toppled the neutralist government in December 1960. Prince Souvanna Phouma turned to the Pathet Lao, the Soviet Union, China, and North Vietnam for assistance.²³⁶

At Geneva, talks between the three Laotian groups (Pathet Lao, neutralist, and pro-Western) opened in May 1961. On July 23, 1962, a deal was reached.²³⁷ Prince Souvanna was placed as Prime Minister to lead a coalition government consisting of the pro-Western and the Pathet Lao groups. An important point was that Laos must agree to the principle of neutrality. However, in practice, this Geneva Agreement was breached. The Pathet Lao and North Vietnam were allied and troops from the two were stationed in Eastern Laos.²³⁸

The neutrality that failed in Lao had important ramifications in the Vietnam War. The two eastern provinces of Laos along the boundary of Vietnam were dominated by the Communists allowing them to use the Ho Chi Minh Trail as the route for invasion of South Vietnam.²³⁹

²³⁵ Moss, 80.

²³⁶ Hess, Gary R., *Vietnam and the United States* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 70-71, cited in Moss, 81.

²³⁷ Protocol to the Declaration of the Neutrality of Laos, July 23, 1962, in Porter (ed.), *Vietnam Documents*, vol. 2, Document 77, 156-60, cited in Moss, 89.

²³⁸ Edgar O' Balance, *The Wars in Vietnam: 1954-1980* (New York: Hippocrene, 1981), 28-31, cited in Moss, 89.

²³⁹ Moss, 89.

ASA

Not long after Malaya gained sovereignty in 1957, her leader Tunku Abdul Rahman proposed a plan to create the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA). To him, poverty was the root cause that gave rise to Communism and, thus, a regional bloc had to put an end to it.²⁴⁰ Malaysia under Tunku Abdul Rahman wanted to fulfill the goal concerning “nationalism” by using “regionalism” or ASA. Because members of ASA were “nation-states,” Malaysia’s membership in ASA would automatically help Malaysia achieve the status of a “Malaysian nation.” In addition, the tension from those who disagreed with the “Malaysian concept” was also lessened. Malaysian states boundary would also be prevented from being challenged by countries nearby, specifically Indonesia and the Philippines.²⁴¹

As a consequence, in 1961, ASA was established with three members: Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines. According to a message sent by Tunku Abdul Rahman to President Sukarno of Indonesia dated October 28, 1951 the aim was:²⁴²

to encourage closer relations among the countries of Southeast Asia by discussion, conferences, or consultation, and to achieve agreement freely. It is hoped by this method that countries will be able to understand each other more deeply. It is also the objective of this association to study ways and means of helping one another – particularly in economic, social, and cultural and scientific fields...²⁴³

At first, both Malaysia and the Philippines wanted ASA to focus on politics and security. However, Thailand suggested that it would be too controversial compared to economic cooperation, which might possibly captivate other countries. ASA ended up targeting the

²⁴⁰ Acharya, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, 150.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 152.

²⁴² Ibid., 150.

²⁴³ Ibid., 151.

economic issue. Thanat Khoman, the Thai Foreign Minister, did this to differentiate itself from the anti-Communism of SEATO.²⁴⁴

Nevertheless, ASA was seen by Indonesia to be a “Western-inspired,” “anti-communist bloc.”²⁴⁵ President Sukarno of Indonesia called ASA an “Anglo-U.S. plot to subvert the newly independent states of Southeast Asia.”²⁴⁶ Sukarno’s allegation was confirmed when the leaders of Malaysia and the Philippines revealed their anti-communist attitude and standpoint.²⁴⁷ In September 1963, Malaysia incorporated Sabah in North Borneo, which led to conflict between Malaysia and the Philippines and finally resulted in the collapse of ASA.²⁴⁸

ASEAN

On August 8, 1967, ASEAN was established with five founding members: Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore.²⁴⁹ The new regional organization had many goals. According to the Bangkok Declaration 1967²⁵⁰, the aims and purposes of ASEAN are:

1. To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of South-East Asian Nations;

²⁴⁴ See Jorgensen-Dahl, Arnfinn. 1982. *Regional organization and order in South-East Asia*. Hong Kong: MacMillan Press, 14-23, footnoted in Alice D. Ba, *(Re)Negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, Studies in Asian Security (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 46.

²⁴⁵ Evans Young, “Development Cooperation in ASEAN: Balancing Free Trade and Regional Planning”, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1981, 91, cited in Acharya, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, 153.

²⁴⁶ Ghazali Shafie, M. 1998, *Ghazali Shafie’s memoir on the formation on Malaysia*. Bangi, Selangor: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 22, cited in Ba, 46.

²⁴⁷ Ba, 46.

²⁴⁸ Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia*, 73.

²⁴⁹ Acharya, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, 155.

²⁵⁰ “The ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) Bangkok, 8 August 1967,” *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, accessed April 5, 2018, <http://asean.org/the-asean-declaration-bangkok-declaration-bangkok-8-august-1967/>

2. To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter;
3. To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields;
4. To provide assistance to each other in the form of training and research facilities in the educational, professional, technical and administrative spheres;
5. To collaborate more effectively for the greater utilization of their agriculture and industries, the expansion of their trade, including the study of the problems of international commodity trade, the improvement of their transportation and communications facilities and the raising of the living standards of their peoples;
6. To promote South-East Asian studies;
7. To maintain close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes, and explore all avenues for even closer cooperation among themselves.²⁵¹

Whether to allow one or two Vietnams to join ASEAN was a controversial topic for ASEAN even before the establishment of ASEAN in 1967,²⁵² and later when the Vietnam War ended in 1975.²⁵³ The end of fighting and the need for ASEAN to have all states in Southeast Asia as members, as suggested by Thanat Khoman, was meant to ensure regional resilience. To prevent foreign powers from splitting Southeast Asia, it was necessary for the organization to include all countries in Southeast Asia even those with differing political ideologies.²⁵⁴ However, like ASA, the attempt in 1967 to convince more countries to join the group was in vain.²⁵⁵ At that time, Vietnam was still divided into two parts each with differing ideologies. There were contesting views about whether to let two Vietnams join the new organization. Whilst the

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Both North and South Vietnam were considered whether to be allowed to become the members of ASEAN before its establishment in 1967. However, in 1967, it turned out that both did not gain membership. Source: Ba, 58-59.

²⁵³ Ba, 105.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 57.

²⁵⁵ Carlyle A. Thayer, "ASEAN and Indochina: The dialogue," in *ASEAN into the 1990s*, ed. Alison Broinowski. (London: Pallgrave Macmillan, 1990), .140, cited in Ba, 58.

membership of both North and South Vietnam would enhance unity within the region, and, thus, lead to stability, the admission of North Vietnam was worrisome.²⁵⁶

However, in the end, Narciso Ramos the Foreign Minister of the Philippines pointed out a legitimate reason not to include North Vietnam yet. To become members of ASEAN, “a state must be of Southeast Asia” and “a state must conform to ASEAN’s principles and purposes,”²⁵⁷ which were stated in the aims and purposes of ASEAN in the Bangkok Declaration mentioned earlier. These prerequisites derived from Ramos’ speech at the inaugural meeting of ASEAN:²⁵⁸

The five ASEAN nations have high expectations for this organization and they truly welcome its expanded membership. We, however, realize that numbers are not the decisive factor in the effectiveness of an international organization. What really matters is a member state’s willingness and capability for cooperative endeavors. *Thus, we would have ASEAN’s membership limited solely to states within South East Asia and only to those who subscribe to the principles, aims and purposes enunciated in the Declaration and possess mutual interests and common problems shared by the present member countries.*²⁵⁹

In addition, the question also arose whether to let South Vietnam join the organization, after the rejection of North Vietnam. In the end, South Vietnam was not allowed to join in order to avoid being labeled as a group that supported the United States, and to avoid antagonizing North Vietnam.²⁶⁰ According to the Bangkok Declaration mentioned earlier, the second aim and purpose of ASEAN was “To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the

²⁵⁶ Ba, 58.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ ASEAN, “Verbatim Record of the Inaugural Meeting of ASEAN,” 8 August 1967, emphasis added according to the book, cited in Ba, 58.

²⁶⁰ Ba, 58.

principles of the United Nations Charter;...”.²⁶¹ However, in 1967, both North and South Vietnam were still highly involved in the Vietnam War. Therefore, admitting either North or South Vietnam into ASEAN would be problematic.

ASEAN was opposed by North Vietnam at the onset. The “front for American imperialist designs in Southeast Asia” was the label North Vietnam gave to ASEAN.²⁶² However, in 1991, Vietnam for the first time expressed its intention to join ASEAN. Vietnam was willing to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.²⁶³ Following this, Vietnam received ASEAN observer status in 1992.²⁶⁴ On July 22, 1995, Vietnam joined ASEAN as a full member.²⁶⁵

There were both political and economic reasons for Vietnam to join ASEAN. A survey conducted in 1992 in Southeast Asia by a journalist concluded that: “while analysts admit ASEAN’s economies are enough bait for Vietnam to consider joining the organization, they say Hanoi’s real motive lies in the renewed security threat from its powerful neighbor, China.”²⁶⁶

Vietnam’s relations with Thailand and other Indochinese countries improved because of Vietnam joining ASEAN. Vietnam also reaped the benefit of being a member of ASEAN by pushing Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia to gain ASEAN membership so that Vietnam could play

²⁶¹ “The ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) Bangkok, 8 August 1967,” *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, accessed April 5, 2018, <http://asean.org/the-asean-declaration-bangkok-declaration-bangkok-8-august-1967/>

²⁶² William J. Duiker, “The Dynamics of Vietnam’s Foreign Policy,” *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 1978, 319.

²⁶³ Nguyen Vu Tung, “Testing the Institutional Approach Cooperation between Vietnam and ASEAN,” in the *Vietnam’s New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*, 1st ed, eds. Stephanie Balme, Mark Sidel, and Groupe d’études sur le Vietnam contemporain, The CERI Series in International Relations and Political Economy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 53.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁶⁶ Yuli Ismartono, “Security, Economic Pressures Goad Hanoi to Join ASEAN,” IPS-Inter Press Service, July 15, 1992, cited in Elliott, 142.

a principal role among these states after the end of the Cold War. Under ASEAN, Vietnam assuming such a position would be legitimate. Also, having more members in ASEAN that have the same level or worse economic standing than Vietnam would help Vietnam to gain the most possible aid from the original members of ASEAN.²⁶⁷ In July 2001, the “Hanoi Declaration on Narrowing Development Gap for Closer ASEAN Integration” was signed.²⁶⁸ It was the outcome of Vietnam’s push to help the newcomers or “CLMV countries” narrow the economic gap with the original members.²⁶⁹

Thailand-Vietnam Relations within ASEAN and Widening Cooperation

Thailand played a critical role in helping Vietnam to join ASEAN. In addition, both also cooperated in sub-regional framework the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and the Mekong River Commission (MRC). The major powers did not have much influence on Thailand-Vietnam relations in the 1990s. Instead, a regional body like ASEAN became an increasingly important factor in determining Thailand-Vietnam relations. As David W. P. Elliott argued, for Vietnam to become a member of ASEAN, Vietnam needed to deal with its past animosity toward ASEAN members. For the front-line state during the third Indochina conflict like Thailand this was particularly the case.²⁷⁰ Thanyathip Sripana explained that Vietnam had much to gain from normalizing relations with Thailand.²⁷¹ One important benefit was the international perception of Vietnam as “a peace loving country” because Vietnam could reconcile with a direct rival like

²⁶⁷ Jorn Dosch, “Vietnam’s ASEAN Membership Revisited: Golden Opportunity or Golden Cage?” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 28, no. 2 (2006): 244.

²⁶⁸ ASEAN 2001a. “Hanoi Declaration on Narrowing Development Gap for Closer ASEAN Integration”. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat. <http://www.aseansec.org/934.htm>, cited in Dosch, 245.

²⁶⁹ Dosch, 244-245.

²⁷⁰ Elliott, 145.

²⁷¹ Sripana, 67.

Thailand on the dispute in Cambodia.²⁷² Furthermore, economic renovation in Vietnam would be enhanced because of a peaceful situation. In other words, the budget would not have to be dedicated to military purposes, for example, for the dispute in Cambodia and for border security with its neighbors. Lastly, there were lots of economic opportunities from having friendly ties with Thailand.²⁷³ Wang Khak Nam, a professor at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (Vietnam National University),²⁷⁴ claimed that Thailand-Vietnam relations were enhanced by Vietnam's ASEAN membership. The rationale behind this was because each members' national interest is what ASEAN collectively strives for. This also prevented the involvement of major powers because ASEAN was so concentrated on its goals.²⁷⁵ This means Thailand-Vietnam relations could not be overly influenced by the major powers as both Thailand and Vietnam are members of the same organization pursuing the same interest.

As mentioned earlier, the policy of Chatichai Choonhavan "turning the Indochina battlefields into market places" was in response to renovation in Vietnam.²⁷⁶ In 1988, the Foreign Correspondents Club, Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan revealed that his "foreign policy" was that "politics will take second place to economics" and that "rapprochement with Vietnam is one of my top priorities."²⁷⁷ Because ASEAN had been implementing radical measures on Vietnam to settle the Cambodian problem, this was a big change in Thai foreign policy.²⁷⁸ Some believed that Thailand was aiming to hold the upper hand in trade with Indochinese countries

²⁷² Ibid., 67-68.

²⁷³ Ibid., 68.

²⁷⁴ Wang, (3).

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 176.

²⁷⁶ Acharya, *A New Regional Order in South-East Asia*, 42.

²⁷⁷ Nation (Bangkok), December 23, 1988 cited in Leszek Buszynski, "New Aspirations and Old Constraints in Thailand's Foreign Policy," *Asian Survey* 29, no. 11 (1989): 1059.

²⁷⁸ Acharya, *A New Regional Order in South-East Asia*, 42.

and serve as the “link” with them.²⁷⁹ The other notable effect was “ASEAN’s consensual diplomacy” in dealing with the dispute in Cambodia was being compromised.²⁸⁰

The year 1990 was a period in which ASEAN countries held different opinions about how to see the new ties with Indochina. Notably, in November 1990, President Suharto travelled to Vietnam. Since Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia, there was no leader of an ASEAN country to travel to North Vietnam. For Indonesia and Vietnam, the gate for economic opportunities was opened. However, some countries including Singapore disagreed with this interaction.²⁸¹

The new economic policy of Vietnam started to bear fruit as it opened an option for ASEAN to invest when prospects of protectionism loomed in Western markets.²⁸² In the end, Vietnam became a market for all ASEAN members, which legitimized the policy of Chatichai Choonhavan earlier.²⁸³

On October 2, 1991, Arsa Sarasin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, delivered the following speech at the 46th Session of the United Nations General Assembly:²⁸⁴

It is a great challenge for Thailand to help build a new regional order in Southeast Asia. Being an ASEAN member with the closest proximity to the non-ASEAN countries in Southeast Asia, Thailand is in a unique position to extend a helping hand to Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar. Through the creation of an atmosphere conducive to greater understanding and co-operation, Thailand and ASEAN will move closer to the realization of ASEAN’s objectives. We would like to see our neighbours enjoy peace and prosperity because they too have the right to contribute to the dynamic future of

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Donald Weatherbee, “ASEAN the Big Loser in Thai Race for Profit in Indochina,” *the Strait Times*, May 5, 1989, cited in Acharya, *A New Regional Order in South-East Asia*, 42.

²⁸¹ Acharya, *A New Regional Order in South-East Asia*, 43.

²⁸² Ibid., 44.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ “Excerpt of Statement by H.E. Mr. Arsa Sarasin Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand before the 46th Session of the United Nations General Assembly New York, October 2, 1991,” *Thailand Foreign Affairs Newsletter*, October-November 1991, 6.

Southeast Asia, a future which will truly reflect ASEAN's objectives and indeed a new regional order of harmony and cooperation for Southeast Asia.²⁸⁵

This statement shows that Thailand played the role as the medium between the Indochinese countries and Myanmar and ASEAN. Because Thailand assumed this role, Thailand and Vietnam relations were also enhanced.

In addition to Thailand's cooperation with Vietnam in ASEAN, Thailand-Vietnam relations were also close at the sub-regional level. Under the sponsorship of the ADB, in 1992, the Greater Mekong Sub-region Program was established. Priority sub-regional projects included "transport, energy, agriculture, the environment, and trade facilitation."²⁸⁶ There were also schemes from Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos to create an "East-West road link" or corridor.²⁸⁷ According to the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), in 1997, the GMS ministerial meeting, in Manila, tried to promote this scheme.²⁸⁸ The idea of creating the corridor was to link Malamang in Burma, Mae Sot, Mukdahan in Thailand, Savannakhet in Laos, and Danang in Vietnam. The main goal of this was to promote economic cooperation.²⁸⁹ This significantly enhanced economic cooperation between Thailand and Vietnam. The two countries would become more connected. This also meant closer relations between the Thais and the Vietnamese.

Thailand and Vietnam also cooperated in managing the Mekong river. It was in 1957 that Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam worked together on the Mekong river. At that time, the Committee for Coordination of Investigations on the Lower Mekong Basin or the Mekong

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 7.

²⁸⁶ "ADB's Work in Regional Cooperation and Integration," *Asian Development Bank*, accessed April 5, 2018, <https://www.adb.org/themes/regional-cooperation/overview>

²⁸⁷ Chatrudee Theparat, "Mekong cooperation pushed – road link would increase trade," *the Bangkok Post*, April 23, 1997. Factiva.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

Committee was organized by the United Nations. However, these four member states gained autonomy in administering the river when the Agreement on Cooperation for Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin (the Mekong Agreement) was signed by them on April 5, 1995, in Chiangrai, Thailand, establishing the “Mekong River Commission” (MRC).²⁹⁰

During the signing ceremony of the Mekong Agreement, one part of the address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand was:²⁹¹

...This agreement is a balanced framework which takes into account the key interests and emerging needs of all signatory countries. It touches upon almost all aspects of the lives of millions of people who live along the Mekong and strengthens people-to-people ties. Most important of all, this agreement underscores the cardinal principle of reasonable and equitable uses of water. It is indeed a firm and practical foundation for mutually beneficial cooperation amongst the parties. ...²⁹²

According to this speech, the Mekong agreement was vital for people-to-people ties. Both the Thailand and Vietnam could use this framework to further deepen their relations in other areas aside from political and economic cooperation. This idea was in fact stated by Anand Panyarachun the former Prime Minister of Thailand at the seminar on “Thai-Vietnamese Relations in the Present Decade and Prospects for Cooperation in the Future” hosted by “the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Thammasat University” in 1996. He stated that “mutual relations are not based on joint communiques but on people-to-people relationships, which should come before politics and economic issues.”²⁹³

²⁹⁰ “The Story of Mekong cooperation,” *Mekong River Commission*, accessed April 5, 2018, <http://www.mrcmekong.org/about-mrc/history/>

²⁹¹ *Thailand Foreign Affairs Newsletter*, March-May 1995, 6.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ “Need for ‘people-to-people’ ties stressed,” *the Nation*, August 3, 1996, p.A3, cited in Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, and Department of Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 264.

In short, in this post-cold war period, Vietnam's relations with foreign countries shifted in nature. Because the Soviet Union had less influence in the Southeast Asian region, Vietnam chose to have good relations with China even though it was not a very reliable partner. On the other hand, the United States and Japan worked together to make Vietnam comply with their demands. It turned out that ASEAN was to be the more important ally for Vietnam by the end of the twentieth century. In the past, there were attempts at regional integration but they failed. Such attempts were also seen as dominated by the West. However, ASEAN was different in that it tried to avoid being influenced by any major power. Vietnam at that time was also separated into two parts making it unable to join ASEAN when it was established because of concerns about ideology and major powers' influence on the organization. Thailand-Vietnam relations improved because of ASEAN. Thailand assumed the role of engaging Vietnam with ASEAN. The relations between the two countries expanded into sub-regional organizations which were the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and the Mekong River Commission (MRC). This also enhanced people-to-people ties between the two countries.

CHAPTER FOUR:

CONCLUSION

This thesis studies Thailand-Vietnam relations in the 1990s. It began by looking back to the history of relations between the two countries. Under Prime Minister Pridi Phanomyong in 1946, Thailand's relations with Vietnam were intimate because he supported the independence movement in many ways. However, when the military returned to power in 1947, bilateral relations were strained because the military chose to side with the United States against Communism.

Winning the war in 1975, Hanoi promptly approached Thailand to find ways to establish diplomatic relations. However, the negotiation did not go very well as there were some issues that could not be agreed on, particularly about the Vietnamese migrants in Thailand and the ownership of aircraft and weapons. In the end, both agreed to put these issues aside as a matter to be negotiated later and they decided to establish diplomatic relations on August 6, 1976 on four principles. One of the principles was to avoid intervention from major powers as had happened in the Second Indochina war. The path of their bilateral relations that seemed to be working turned rough when Vietnam invaded Cambodia at the end of 1978. It was about a decade later when Vietnam decided to withdraw its troops.

During 1976-1985, Vietnam faced a macroeconomic crisis. The Second Five Year Plan (1976-1980) met with failure. Because of that economic crisis, Vietnam adopted a more capitalist economic solution. The Third Five-Year Plan (1981-1985) introduced a capitalist economy; state enterprises did not have to rely on the state budget but could find resources

elsewhere and a certain amount of the yield could be sold at a price determined by the market. This plan was a success.

Then this thesis looked into various documents that determined Vietnamese foreign policy in the 1990s. The “Doi Moi” policy adopted at the 6th National Party Congress in December 1986 was one of the most important policies. Many features of the capitalist economy were adopted in Vietnam. The Political Report of the 6th Party Congress in 1986 also indicated Vietnam’s softer approach towards Southeast Asian countries and the Cambodian conflict. Resolution No. 32 adopted by the Politburo in June 1986 also showed Vietnam’s more compromising stance on the Cambodian conflict. Resolution No.13 adopted in May 1988 at the 6th Politburo Assembly showed more openness in foreign relations. It later brought about the policy that “Vietnam wants to befriend all countries in the international community and to strive for peace, independence, and development,” adopted in June 1991 at the 7th National Party Congress. The “Strategy for Socio-Economic Stability and Development until 2000” was also adopted. “Multilateralization and diversification” of economic relations became the theme of that strategy. At the 8th Political Party Congress, there were some conservatives in Vietnam who were not pleased with the reform especially on Vietnam’s ASEAN membership and normalization with the United States. However, ASEAN was finally mentioned in the Political Report.

The change in Vietnam led to the “turning the Indochina battlefields into market places” policy of the Chatichai Choonhavan government. Chatichai Choonhavan was quite different from General Prem Tinsulanonda who took office before him. Whilst the administration under General Prem Tinsulanonda implemented tough measures on Vietnam related to the Cambodian conflict, the administration under Chatichai Choonhavan tried to engage Vietnam in economic cooperation grounds.

The bilateral relations between Thailand and Vietnam in the early 1990s were full of economic cooperation. In 1991, they agreed on the Agreement on the Establishment of the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation. In the following years, many more agreements on economic cooperation were reached. By the late 1990s, both could reach agreements on very sensitive issues: Vietnamese non-refugees, maritime boundary, and visa exemption. In 1996, their cooperation expanded into cultural aspects. Thailand also provided Vietnam with technical assistance. In addition, Ban Na Jok village also helped foster their relations. The warm relations were also confirmed by the exchanges of high level visits between the two countries. This study also shows that the trade value between the two countries rose each year during 1990-2000.

Vietnam's relations with major powers, ASEAN, and the sub-regional organizations were also discussed. The major powers were not very supportive for Vietnam in the post-Cold War period. From 1989-1991, the Soviet Union suffered from the four "losses." It was not in a position to help Vietnam. There were also many indications of the Soviet Union downgrading relations with Vietnam. China, on the other hand, normalized relations with Vietnam in November 1991 after the Cambodian conflict was settled in October. However, it was not as cordial as before. In addition, there remained territorial disputes between the two countries. As for the United States, bilateral relations with Vietnam were not normalized until 1995. Before that, the United States imposed sanctions on Vietnam and pushed Vietnam on the prisoner of war and missing in action issue. Although Japan had initiated the Fukuda doctrine in 1977, which was supportive of Vietnam, it later followed the United States policy in imposing sanctions on Vietnam because of the prisoner of war and missing in action issue. The Fukuda doctrine was revived in 1991. In 1992, Official Development Assistance (ODA) of Japan to Vietnam was re-

introduced, which was also supported by the United States. In the end, ASEAN was more reliable than any of these major powers in the 1990s.

Before the establishment of ASEAN, SEATO and ASA were the two important regional organizations in Southeast Asia. SEATO was clearly initiated by the United States to serve its purpose to fight against Communism. However, because of events in Laos, it caused worry for Thailand. Thailand was not confident whether SEATO would be helpful in case Thailand was invaded by Communist Lao given that SEATO could only operate if there was “unanimity” of all seven members. In the end, the United States made a bilateral assurance of its support in case Thailand were harmed by the Communists. This agreement was called the “Thanat-Rusk Communique.” ASA was a regional organization initiated by Malaysia. Again, it was seen as an organization influenced by the West and anti-Communism. It later broke down because of the conflict within its members. ASEAN was quite different from these two organizations. ASEAN had considered two times if ASEAN should accept Vietnam’s membership: before the creation of ASEAN and around the period when the Vietnam War ended. However, when considering whether to accept North or South Vietnam, ASEAN rejected both in order to avoid being labeled as siding with the West, or indirectly causing conflict. Regardless of the fact that North Vietnam accused ASEAN earlier of siding with the West, in 1991, Vietnam expressed its intention to consider the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. Thailand helped Vietnam in dealing with ASEAN. Vietnam later obtained observer status in 1992 and became a member in 1995. In joining ASEAN, Vietnam gained benefits politically and economically. Thailand-Vietnam relations also expanded to sub-regional organizations, particularly the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and the Mekong River Commission (MRC).

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